ΕΝ ΟΛΙΓΩ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ

THE
Almoſt Chriſtian
DISCOVERED,
OR
The Falſe-Profeſsor
Tried and Caſt.

Being the ſubſtance of Seven
SERMONS, firſt preached at
Sepulchres, London, 1661. and now at the
inportunity of friends made publick.

By *MATTHEW MEADE*.

Luk. 16.14. *And the Phariſees who were covetous*
heard all theſe things, and they derided him.
Verſ. 15. *And Jeſus ſaid unto them, ye are they which*
juſtifie your ſelves before men, but God *knoweth*
your hearts : For *that which is highly eſteemed*
amongſt men, is abomination in the ſight of God.

London Printed for *Tho. Parkhurſt*, at the three
Crowns in the lower end of *Cheapſide*, over-
against the great Conduit. 1662. EG: 1693

p. [illegible]

To the Congregation at Sepulchres *that were the Auditors of theſe Sermons.*

Grace and Peace be multiplyed.

Beloved,

WHat the meaning of that providence was that called me to the occupation of my Talent amongſt you this Summer, will be beſt read and underſtood by the effects

Alfred Bull Mr. 2nd, 1917 2/6

of it upon your own ſouls : The kindly increaſe of grace and holineſs in heart and life, can onely prove it to have been in mercy: where this is not the fruit of the word, there it becomes a judgement. The word travels with life or death, ſalvation or damnation, & bringeth forth one or other in every ſoul that hears it ; I would not for a world (were it in my power to make the choice) that my labours, which were meant & deſigned for the promotion of your immortal ſouls, to the glory of the other World, in a preſent perſuance of the things of your peace, ſhould be found to have been a *Miniſtration of Death and Condemnation*, in the great day of Ieſus Chriſt. Yet this (the Lord knoweth) is the too common effect of the moſt plain and powerful Preaching of the Goſpel, The *waters of the Sanctuary*, do not always heal where they come, for there are *mirie and* Ezek. 47. 11. *mariſh places that ſhall be given to ſalt.* למלח נתנו The ſame word (למח) is elſewhere in Scripture rendered *barrenneſs*, he *turneth a* Pſ 107.34, *faithful land* (למלחה) *into barrenneſs* ſo that the judgement denounced upon theſe miry and mariſh places, is that the *curſe of barrenneſs* ſhall reſt upon them, notwithſtanding the *waters of the Sanctuary* over-flow them.

It is ſad but certain, that the Goſpel inflicteth a death of its own as well as the Law; or elſe how are thoſe trees in *Jude*, ſaid to be δὶς ἀποθανόντα *twice dead*, *plucked up by the roots.* Jude. 12. Yea that which in it ſelf is the greateſt mercy, through the interpoſition of mens luſts, and the efficacy of this curſed ſin of unbelief, turneth to the greateſt judgement, as the richeſt and moſt generous Wine makes the ſharpeſt Vinegar. Our Lord Chriſt himſelf, Rom.5.8 the choiceſt mercy that the bowels of a God could bleſs a periſhing Ioh.3.16. World withal, whoſe coming (himſelf bearing Witneſs) was on no leſs errand then that of eternal life and bleſſedneſs to the Ioh.10.10 loſt and curſed ſons of *Aaam*; Yet to how many was he אבן נגף Iſa.8 14. וצור מכשול *a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence*; Yea, *a gin and a ſnare*, and that to both the *houſes of Iſrael*, the onely profeſſing people of God at that day, in the World. And is he not a ſtone of ſtumbling in the Miniſtry of the Goſpel to many profeſſors to this very day, upon which they fall and are broken? When he ſaith, *bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me,* he doth therein plainly ſuppoſe that both in his perſon and Doctrine the generality of men would be offended in him. Mat.11.6

Not that this is the deſign of Chriſt and the Goſpel, but it comes ſo to paſs through the corruptions of the hearts of men whereby they make light of Chriſt, and ſtand out againſt that life and grace which the Lord Jeſus by his blood ſo dearly purchaſed, and is by the Preaching of the Goſpel ſo freely tendered; the wilful refuſal whereof, will as ſurely double our damnation, as the acceptance thereof will ſecure our eternal Salvation.

Oh conſider it is a thing of the moſt ſerious concernment in the World, how we carry our ſelves under the Goſpel, and with what diſpoſitions and affections of heart and ſoul, ſeaſons of grace are entertained; this being taken into the conſideration to make it weight, that we are the nearer to heaven or to hell, to ſalvation or damnation, by every ordinance we ſit under: boaſt not therefore of Priviledges injoyed with neglect of the important duties thereby required. Remember *Capernaums* caſe and tremble; as many go to Heaven by the very gates of Hell, ſo more go to Hell by the gates of Heaven, in that the number of them that profeſs Chriſt, is greater then the number of them that truely cloſe with Chriſt. Mat. 11. 23.

Beloved, I know the Preaching of the Goſpel hath proſelyted many of you into a profeſſion; but I fear that but few of you are brought by it to a true cloſe with the Lord Chriſt for Salvation, (I beſeech you bear with my jealouſie, for it is the fruit of a tender love to your precious ſouls) moſt men are good Chriſtians in the verdict of their own opinion, but you know the Law alloweth no man to be a witneſs in his own caſe, becauſe their affection uſually out-acteth conſcience, and ſelf-love baulketh truth for its own intereſt.

The heart of man is the greateſt impoſtor and cheat in the World, God himſelf adjuſts it, *Jeremy* 17. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things.* Some of the deceits whereof you will find diſco-

עקב חלב
מכל
Supplantativum cor præ omni

diſcovered in this treatiſe, which ſheweth you that every grace hath its counterfeit, and that the higheſt profeſſion may be where true converſion is not.

The deſign hereof is not to *break the bruiſed reed, nor to quench the ſmoking flax*, not to diſcourage the weakeſt beleiver, but to awaken formal profeſſors. I would not ſad the heart of any, *whom God would not have made ſad*, though I know it is hard to rip up the dangerous eſtate and condition of a profeſſing Hypocrite, but that the weak Chriſtian will think himſelf concerned in the diſcovery. And therefore as I Preached a Sermon on ſincerity, among you, for the ſupport and encouragement of ſuch, at the end of this: ſo I did purpoſe to have Printed

Mat. 12. 20.

Ezek. 13. 22.

Printed it with this, but who can be Maſter of his own purpoſes, that is (as I am) under ſuch daily variety of providences ; your kindly acceptation of this, will make me a debter for that.

The dedication hereof belongs to you on a double account, for as it had not been Preached, but that love to your ſouls cauſed it, ſo it had much leſs been Printed but that your importunate deſire procured it: and therefore what entertainment ſoever it findeth in the World, yet I hope I may expect you will welcome it, eſpecially conſidering it was born under your roof, and thereſore hopes to find favour in your eyes, and room in your hearts.

Accept it I beſeech you, as a publique acknowledgement of the ingagements which your great and (I think I may ſay) unparalleled reſpects have laid me under, which I can no way compenſate, but by my prayers, and if you will take them for ſatisfaction I do promiſe to be your remembrancer at the throne of grace, whilſt I am

Matthew Meade.

TO THE READER.

Reader.

I *Know how cuſtomary it is for men to aſcend the publique ſtage, with premiſed Apologies for the weakneſs and unworthineſs of their labours, which is an argument that their deſires (either for the ſake of others profit, or their own credit, or both,) are ſtretched beyond the tedder of their abilities; and that they covet to commend themſelves to the Worlds cenſure, in a better dreſs then common infirmity will allow; for my own part I may truely ſay with* Gideon, Behold my thouſand

אלפי חדל Iud. 6. 15. ſand is the meaneſt (*my Talent is the ſmalleſt*) and I am the leaſt in my Fathers Houſe, *and therefore this appearance in publique is not the fruit of my own choice, which would rather have been in ſome other ſubject, wherein I ſtand in ſome ſenſe indebted to the World, or elſe in ſomewhat more digeſted, and poſſibly better fitted for common acceptation; but this is but to conſult the intereſt of a mans own name, which in matters of this concern, is no better then a* ſowing to the fleſh, *and the harveſt of ſuch a ſeeds time will be* in corruption. Gal. 6. 8.

Thou haſt here one of the ſaddeſt conſiderations imaginable preſented to thee, and that is, how far it is poſſible a man may go in a profeſſion of Religion, and yet after all fall ſhort of ſalvation; haw far he may run, and yet not ſo run as to obtain, *this I ſay is ſad, but not ſo ſad as true, for our Lord Chriſt doth plainly atteſt it*, ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for many I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able. 1 Cor. 9. 24. Luk. 13. 24.

My deſign herein is that the formal

ſleepy profeſſor may be awakened, and the cloſe Hypocrite diſcovered; but my fear is, that weak beleivers may be hereby diſcouraged: for as it is hard to ſhew how low a Child of God may fall in ſin, and yet have true grace, but that the ſinner will be apt thereupon to preſume; ſo it is as hard to ſhew how high a Hypocrite may riſe in a profeſſion, and yet have no grace, but that the beleiver will be apt thereupon to deſpond. The prevention whereof I have carefully indeavoured, by ſhewing, that though a man may go thus far, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, *yet a man may fall ſhort of this, and be a true Chriſtian notwithſtanding; judge not therefore thy ſtate by any one character thou findeſt laid down of a falſe profeſſor, but read the whole and then make a judgement, for I have cared, as not to give* childrens bread to Dogs, *ſo not to uſe the Dog-Whip to ſcare the children: yet I could wiſh that this book might fall into the hands of ſuch onely whom it chiefly concerns, who* have a name to live, and yet are dead, *being buſie with the form* of godlineſs, *but ſtrangers to the* power of

Mat. 15. 26.

Rev. 3. 1.

2 Tim. 3. 5.

of it. *Theſe are the proper ſubject of this Treatiſe. And the Lord follow it with his bleſſing wherever it comes, that it may be an awakening word to all ſuch, and eſpecially to that generation of profligate profeſſors (with which this age abounds) who, if they keep to their Church, bow the knee, tale out a few prayers, and at a good time receive the Sacrament; think they do enough for Heaven, and hereupon judge their condition ſafe, and their Salvation ſure, though their be a hell of ſin in their hearts*, and the Poyſon of Aſps under their lips, *their minds being as yet carnal and unconverted, and their converſations filthy and unſanctified: if eternal life be of ſo eaſie attainment, and to be had at ſo cheap a rate of devotion, it is to me a wonder what our Lord Chriſt meant to tell us*, ſtraight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it. *And why the Apoſtle ſhould perplex us with ſuch a needleſs injunction*, To give diligence to make their callling and election ſure, *certainly therefore it is no*

Ro. 3.13.

Mat. 7. 14.

2 Pet. 1. 10

no ſuch eaſie thing to be ſaved, as many make it ; and that thou wilt ſee plainly in the following diſcourſe : I have been ſomewhat ſhort in the application of it, and therefore let me here be thy remembrancer in five important duties.

Firſt, Take heed of reſting in a form of godlineſs , *as if duties* ex opere operato *could confer grace ; a lifeleſs formality is advanced to a very high eſteem in the World, as a* Kab of Doves Dung, *was ſold in the Famine of* Samaria , *at a very dear rate. Alas the profeſſion of godlineſs is but a ſandy foundation, to build the hope of an immortal ſoul upon for eternity, remember the Lord Jeſus Chriſt called him a fooliſh builder* , that founded his houſe upon the ſand, *and the ſad event proved him ſo* , for it fell , and great was the fall of it. *Oh therefore lay thy foundations by faith upon the Rock Chriſt Jeſus , look to Chriſt through all, and reſt upon Chriſt in all.*

2 King.6. 25.

Mat.7.16 verſ.27.

1 Cor. 3. 11.

Secondly, Labour to ſee an excellency in the power of godlineſs, *a beauty in the life of grace; if the means of grace have a lovelineſs in them, ſurely grace it ſelf hath much more, for* finis dat amabilitatem mediis, *the goodneſs of the means lies in its ſutableneſs and ſerviceableneſs to the end, the form of godlineſs hath no goodneſs in it, any farther then it ſteads and becomes uſeful to the ſoul in the power and practiſe of godlineſs. The life of holineſs is the onely excellent life, it is the life of Saints and Angels in Heaven, yea it is the life of God himſelf. As it is a great proof of the baſeneſs and filthineſs of ſin, that ſinners ſeek to cover it, ſo it is a great proof of the excellency of godlineſs, that ſo many pretend to it; The very Hypocrites fair profeſſion pleads the cauſe of Religion, although the Hypocrite is then really worſt, when he is ſeemingly beſt.*

Malus ubi bonum ſe ſimulat tunc eſt peſſimus.

Thirdly, Look upon things to come as the greateſt realities, *for* non entis & non apparentis idem eſt effectus, *things that are not beleived,* *work no more upon the affections then if they had no being; and this is the grand reaſon why the generality of men ſuffer their affections to lacquey after the World, ſetting the creature in the place of God in their hearts.*

Moſt men judge of the reality of things by their viſibility and proximity to ſenſe, and therefore the choice, of that wretched Cardinal becomes their option, who would not leave his part in Paris, *for his part in* Paradiſe: *ſure whatever his intereſt might be in the former, he had little enough in the latter: well may covetouſneſs be called Idolatry, when it thus chuſes the World for its God.* Col. 3. 5.

O conſider eternity is no Dream, Mar. 9 44 *Hell and the Worm that never dies is no melancholy conceit, heaven is no feigned* Elyſium: *there is the greateſt reality imaginable in theſe things, though they are ſpiritual and out of the ken of ſenſe, yet they are real and within the view of faith:* look not therefore at the things which are ſeen, but look at the things which are not ſeen; for the things that are

2 Cor. 4. ſeen are temporal, but the
18. things which are not ſeen are eternal.

Fourthly, Set a high rate upon thy ſoul, *what we lightly prize we eaſily part with, many men ſell their*
Heb. 12 *ſouls (at the rate of prophane* Eſau's
16. *birth-right)* for a morſel of meat, *nay* for that which *(in the ſence of*
Iſa.55.2. *the Holy Ghoſt is not* bread; *O conſider thy ſoul is the moſt precious and invaluable jewel in the World, it is* σοφȣ̃ τίκτονος καλὸν ποίκιλμα *the moſt beautiful peice of Gods workmanſhip, in the whole creation, it is that which bears the Image of God,*
1.Pet.1. *and which was bought with the blood*
18, 19. *of the Son of God, and ſhall we not ſet a value upon it, and count it precious?*

The Apoſtle Peter *ſpeaks of three very precious things.*

A/

A precious Chriſt,
Precious promiſes,
And precious Faith.

1 Pet.2 7
2 Pet.1 4
and 1. 1.

Now the preciouſnes of all theſe lies in their uſefulneſs to the ſoul. Chriſt is precious, *as being the Redeemer of* precious ſouls; *the* promiſes *are* precious, *as making over this* precious Chriſt, to precious ſouls. Faith *is* precious, *as bringing a* precious ſoul *to cloſe with a* precious Chriſt, *as he is held forth in the* precious promiſes. *Oh take heed that thou art not found* overvaluing *other things and* undervaluing *thy ſoul. Shall thy fleſh, nay thy beaſt be loved, and ſhall thy ſoul be ſlighted? wilt thou cloath and pamper thy body, and yet take no care of thy ſoul? this is as if a man ſhould feed his Dog and ſtarve his Child*; Meats for the belly, and the belly for Meats, but God ſhall deſtroy both it and them. 1 Cor. 6. 13. *Oh let not a tottering periſhing carkaſs have all our time and care, as if the life and Salvation of thy*

Soul were not worth the while.

Laſtly, Meditate much of the ſtrictneſs and ſuddainneſs of that judgement day, which thou and I muſt paſs through into an everlaſting ſtate, *wherein God the impartial judge will require an account at our hands, of all our talents and betruſtments, we muſt then account for time, how we have ſpent that, for eſtate, how we have imployed that, for ſtrength how we have laid laid out that, for affections and mercies how they have been improved, for the relations we ſtood in here, how they have been diſcharged, and for ſeaſons and means of grace how they have been husbanded, and look how* we have ſowed *here*, ſo ſhall we reap hereafter. Gal. 6. 7.

Reader, *theſe are things that of all other deſerve moſt of, and call loudeſt for, our utmoſt care and indeavour; though by the moſt leaſt minded; To conſider what a ſpirit of Atheiſme (if we may judge the tree by the fruits, and the principle by the practiſe) the hearts of moſt men are filled with, who live as if God were not to be ſerved, nor* Mat. 7. 10, 20.

Chriſt to be ſought, nor luſt to be mortified, nor ſelf to be denyed, nor the Scripture to be beleived, nor the judgement day to be minded, nor hell to be feared, nor heaven to be deſired, nor the ſoul to be valued, but give up themſelves to a worſe then brutiſh ſenſuality, to work all uncleanneſs with greedineſs, *living without God in the World, this is a meditation fit enough to break our hearts, if at leaſt we are of holy* Davids *temper, who* beheld the tranſgreſſours and was grieved, *and had* rivers of waters running down his eyes, becauſe men kept not Gods Laws. *The prevention and correction of this ſoul deſtroying diſtemper, is not the leaſt deſign of this Treatiſe now put into thy hand; though the cheif vertue of this receit lies in its ſoveraign uſe to aſſwage and cure the ſwelling tympany of Hypocriſie, yet it may ſerve alſo (with Gods bleſſing) as a plaiſter for the plague-ſore of prophanneſs, if timely applyed by ſerious meditation, and carefully kept on by conſtant prayer.*

Eph. 4.19 and 2 12.

Pſal 119. 158.

verſ. 136.

Reader, Expect *nothing of curioſity or quaintneſs, for then I ſhall deceive thee; but if thou wouldſt have a touchſtone for the tryal of thy ſtate, poſſibly this may ſtead thee: if thou art either a ſtranger to a profeſſion, or a Hypocrite under a profeſſion, then read and tremble, for thou art the man here pointed at.*

Horat. ——Mutato nomine de te
Fabula narratur ——

Mark 9. 1 Luk. 17. 21. *But if the Kingdom of God be come with power into thy ſoul, if Chriſt be formed in thee, if thy heart be upright and ſincere with God, then read and rejoyce.*

Iſa. 48. 17 *I fear I have tranſgreſſed the bounds of an Epiſtle; The mighty God whoſe prerogative it is* to teach, to profit, *whether by the Tongue or the Pen, by ſpeaking or writing, bleſs this tract, that it may be to thee, as a cloud of rain to the dry ground, dropping fatneſs to thy ſoul; that ſo thy fleece being*

ing watered with the dew of Heaven, thou mayſt grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, *In whom I am* 2 Pet. 3. 18.

Thy friend and Servant.

London, Octob. 29. 1661.

Mat. Meade.

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ERRATA.

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J. B.

THE

ACTS 26. 28.

—Εν ὀλίγῳ μὲ πείθεις χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι·

—*Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

IN this Chapter you have the Apoſtle *Pauls* Apology and defenſative plea which he makes for himſelf againſt thoſe blinde Jews which did ſo maliciouſly proſecute him before *Agrippa*, *Feſtus*, *Bernice* and the Council.

In which plea he doth chiefly inſiſt upon three things.

The manner of his life before converſion.

The manner of his converſion.

The manner of his life after converſion.

How he lived before converſion he tells you from v. 4. to 13.

How God wrought on him to converſion, he tells you from verſ. 13. to 18.

How he lived after converſion, he tells you from v. 19. to 23.

Before converſion he was very phariſaical.

The manner of his converſion was very wonderful.

The fruit of his converſion was very remarkable

Before converſion he perſecuted the Goſpel which others preached; after converſion he preached the Goſpel which himſelf had perſecuted.

While he was a perſecutor of the Goſpel the Jews loved him, but now that (by the grace of God) he was become a preacher of the Goſpel, now the Jews hate him and ſought to kill him. Verſ. 21.

Verſ. 9. He was once againſt Chriſt, and then many were for him, but now that he was for Chriſt, all was againſt him; his being an enemy to Jeſus, made others his friends, but when he came to own Jeſus, then they became his enemies.

And this was the great charge they had againſt him, that of a great oppoſer he was become a great profeſſor.

Becauſe God had changed him, therefore this enraged them. As if they would be the worſe, becauſe God had made him better. God had wrought on him by grace, and they ſeem to envy him the grace of God.

Hic vir invidet mihi gratiam Christi.

He preached no treaſon, nor ſowed no ſedition, only he preached repentance and faith in Chriſt, and the Reſurrection, and for this he was called in queſtion.

This is the breviat and ſum of *Pauls* defence and plea for himſelf; which you find in the ſequel of the Chapter, had a different effect upon his Judges.

Feſtus ſeems to cenſure him, verſ. 24.

Agrippa ſeems to be convinced by him, verſ. 28.

The whole Bench ſeems to acquit him, verſ. 30, 31.

Feſtus he thinks *Paul* was beſide himſelf.

Agrippa he is almoſt perſwaded to be ſuch an one as himſelf.

Dei ſapientia, mundo eſt inſania Marl. in loc. *Putat hominem eſſe fanaticum* Marlor. in loc.

Feſtus thinks him mad becauſe he did not underſtand the doctrine of Chriſt and the Reſurrection; *Much learning hath made thee mad.*

Agrippa he is ſo affected with his plea, that he is almoſt wrought into his principle: *Paul* pleads ſo effectually for his Religion, that *Agrippa* ſeems to be upon the turning point to his profeſſion.

Then Agrippa ſaid to Paul, *Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

Almoſt] ἐν ὀλίγῳ, ſo the Greek, the words make ſome debate among the learned. I ſhall not trouble you with the various hints upon them by *Valla, Simplicius, Beza, Eraſmus* and others.

I take the words as we read them, and they ſhew what an efficacy *Pauls* Doctrine had upon *Agrippa's* conſcience. Though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced. His conſcience was touched, though his heart was not renewed.

There is that in Religion, which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the Conſciences of ungodly men. *Obſerv.*

Thou perſwadeſt me] πείθεις, the word is from the Hebrew פתה and it ſignifies both *ſuadere* and *perſuadere*, either to uſe arguments to prevail, or to prevail by the Arguments uſed.

Suadere eſt conantis, perſuadere eſt efficientis. Beza. *Suadet qui conſulit perſuadet qui quo vult, inducit hominem.* Eraſ.

Now it is to be taken in the latter ſence here, to ſhew the influence of *Pauls* Arguments upon *Agrippa*, which had almoſt proſelyted him to the profeſſion of Chriſtianity.

Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian

A Chriſtian] Χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.

I hope I need not tell you what a Chriſtian is, though I am perſwaded many that are called Chriſtians do not know what a Chriſtian is, or if they do, yet they don't know what it is to be a Chriſtian.

A Chriſtian, is a Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt; one that believes in, and follows Chriſt. As he that imbraces the Doctrine of *Arminius* is called an *Arminian*, and as he that owns the Doctrine and way of *Luther*, is called a *Lutheran*, ſo he that imbraces and owns and follows the Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt, he is called a Chriſtian.

The word is taken more largely, and more ſtrictly: more largely, and ſo all that profeſs Chriſt come in the fleſh, are called Chriſtians, in oppoſition to *Heathens* that do not know Chriſt; and to the poor blind *Jews*, that will not own Chriſt; and to the *Mahometan*, that prefers *Mahomet* above Chriſt.

But now in Scripture, the word is of a more ſtrict and narrow acceptation; it is uſed onely to denominate the true Diſciples and followers of Chriſt, *Acts* 11. 26. *The Diſciples were firſt called Chriſtians at* Antioch, 1 Pet. 4. 16. *If any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed*, that is as a member, and Diſciple of Chriſt, and ſo in the Text, *Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

The Word is uſed but in theſe three

places (as I find) in all the New Teſtament, and in each of them it ſignifies in the ſence forementioned.

The *Italians* make the name to be a name of reproach among them, and do uſually abuſe the word Chriſtian to ſignifie a fool. *Fulk. not. on Rhem. Teſt.*

But if as the Apoſtle ſaith, *the Preaching of Chriſt*, is to the World *fooliſhneſs*, then it is no wonder that the Diſciples of Chriſt, are to the World, *fools*. 1 Cor. 1. 18

Yet it is true (in a ſound ſence) that ſo they are. For the whole of godlineſs is a Myſtery. 1 Tim. 3 16.

A man muſt *die*, that would *live*; he muſt be *empty*, that would be *full*; he muſt be *loſt*, that would be *found*; he muſt have *nothing*, that would have all *things*; he muſt be *blind* that would have *illumination*; he muſt be *condemned* that would have *redemption*: ſo he muſt be a *fool*, that would be a *Chriſtian*. *If any man among you ſeems to be wiſe, let him become a fool, that he may be wiſe.* 1 Cor. 4. 11.

He is the true Chriſtian, that is the worlds fool, but wiſe to Salvation.

Thus you have the ſence and meaning of the words breifly explained.

The Text needs no diviſion, and yet it is pitty, the *almoſt* ſhould not be divided from the *Chriſtian.*

Though it is of little avail to divide them as they are linked in the Text, unleſs I could divide them, as they are united in your hearts, this would be a bleſſed diviſion, if the *almoſt* might be taken from the Chriſtian. That ſo you may be not onely ἐν ὀλίγῳ but ἐν πολλῷ not onely *propemodum*, but *admodum*, not onely almoſt, but altogether Chriſtians.

This is Gods work to effect it, but it is our duty to perſwade to it, and O that God would help me to manage the Subject ſo, that you may ſay in the concluſion, thou perſwadeſt me (not almoſt, but) altogether to be a Chriſtian.

The obſervation that I ſhall propound to handle is this.

Doct.

There are very many in the Wold, that are almoſt, and yet but almoſt Chriſtians, many that are neer Heaven, and yet are ne'r the neer, many that are within a little of Salvation, and yet ſhall never injoy the leaſt Salvation, they are within ſight of Heaven, and yet ſhall never have a ſight of God.

There are too ſad expreſſions in Scripture which I cannot but take notice of in this place.

The one is concerning the truly righteous.

The other is concerning the ſeemingly righteous.

It is ſaid of the truly righteous, he ſhall *ſarcely be ſaved*; and it is ſaid of the ſeemingly righteous, he ſhall be *almoſt ſaved. Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God,* Mark 12.24.

μόλις σώζεται 1 Pet.4.18.

The righteous ſhall be ſaved with a *ſcarcely*; that is, through much difficulty: he ſhall go to Heaven through many ſad fears of Hell.

The Hypocrite ſhall be ſaved with an *almoſt*; that is, he ſhall go to

Quod vix fit fit; quod ferè fit non fit.

Hell through many fair hopes of Heaven.

There are two things ariſe from hence, of very ſerious Meditation.

The one is, how oft a beleiver may miſcarry, how low he may fall, and yet have true grace.

The other is, how far a Hypocrite may go in the way to Heaven, how high he may attain, and yet have no grace.

The Saint may be caſt down very neer to Hell, and yet ſhall never come there; and the Hypocrite may be lifted up very neer to Heaven, and yet never come there.

The Saint may *almoſt* periſh, and yet be ſaved Eternally; The Hypocrite may *almoſt* be ſaved, and yet periſh finally.

For the Saint at worſt is really a beleiver, and the Hypocrite at beſt is really a ſinner.

Before I handle the Doctrine I muſt premiſe three things which are of great uſe for the eſtabliſhing of weak beleevers, that they may not be ſhaken and diſcouraged by this Doctrine.

Firſt, There is nothing in the Doctrine that ſhould be matter of ſtumbling or diſcouragement to weak Chriſtians.

The Goſpel doth not ſpeak theſe things to wound beleivers, but to awaken ſinners and formal profeſſors.

As there are none more averſe then weak beleivers to apply the promiſes, and comforts of the Goſpel to themſelves, for whom they are properly deſigned;

So there are none more ready then they to apply the threats and ſevereſt things of the Word to themſelves, for whom they were never intended.

As the Diſciples, when Chriſt told them, *one of you ſhall betray me*, they that were innocent, ſuſpected themſelves moſt, and there fore cry out *Maſter is it I?* Mat.26,15

So weak Chriſtians, when they hear ſinners reproved, or the Hypocrite laid open, in the Miniſtry of the word, they preſently cry out, *it is I.*

It is the Hypocrites fault to ſit under the tryals and diſcoveries of the Word, and yet not to mind them.

And it is the weak Chriſtians fault to draw ſad concluſions of their own ſtate from premiſes which nothing concern them.

There is indeed great uſe of ſuch Doctrine as this is, to all beleivers.

1. To make them look to their ſtanding, upon what bottome they are, and to ſee that the foundation of their hope be well laid, that they build not upon the *Sand*, but upon a *Rock*. *Mat.7.24 26.*

2. It helps to raiſe our admiration of the diſtinguiſhing love of God in bringing us into the *way everlaſting*, when ſo many periſh from the way; and in overpowering our ſouls into a true converſion, when ſo many take up with a graceleſs profeſſion. *Pa 139. 24.*

3. It incites to that excellent duty of heart ſearching, that ſo we may approve our ſelves to God in ſincerity. *Cor.13. 5*

4. It ingages the ſoul in doubled diligence, that it may be found not onely beleiving, but perſevering in faith to the end.

Theſe duties (and ſuch as theſe are) make this Doctrine of uſe to all beleivers, but they ought not to make uſe of it as a ſtumbling block in the way of their peace and comfort.

My deſign in preaching on this ſubject, is not to make ſad the ſouls of thoſe whom Chriſt will not have made ſad, I would bring water, not to *quench* Ma:. 12.20 *the flax that is ſmoking*, but to put out that falſe fire that is of the ſinners *own kindling*, leaſt walking all his days by the light thereof, he ſhould at laſt Iſa.50. 1. *lie down in ſorrow*.

My aim is to level the mountain of the ſinners confidence, not to weaken the hand of the beleivers faith and dependance, to awaken and bring in ſecure formal ſinners, not to diſcourage weak beleivers.

Secondly, I would premiſe this, though many may go far (very far) in the way to Heaven, and yet fall ſhort, yet that ſoul that hath the leaſt true grace ſhall never fall ſhort. *The righteous ſhall hold on his way.* Iob.17.9

Though ſome may do very much in a way of duty (as I ſhall ſhew hereafter) and yet miſcarry, yet that ſoul that doth duty with the leaſt ſincerity ſhall never miſcarry. For *he ſaveth the upright in heart.* Pſal.7.10

The leaſt meaſure of true grace is as ſaving as the greateſt, it ſaves as ſurely, though not ſo comfortably.

The leaſt grace gives a full intereſt in the blood of Chriſt, whereby we are throughly purged; and it gives a full intereſt in the ſtrength and power of Chriſt, whereby we ſhall be certainly preſerved.

Chriſt keeps faith in the ſoul, and faith keeps the ſoul in Chriſt, and ſo *we are kept by the power of God through faith to ſalvation.* 1 Pet. 1.5.

Thirdly, I would premiſe this, they that can hear ſuch truths as this, without ſerious reflection and ſelf examination, I much ſuſpect the goodneſs of their condition.

You'l ſuſpect that man to be next door to a bankerupt, that never caſts up his ſhop, nor looks over his books; and I as verily think that man a hypocrite, that never ſearches nor deals with his own heart.

He that goes on in a road of duty's without any rub or doubting of his ſtate, I doubt no mans ſtate more then his.

When we ſee a man ſick, and yet not ſenſible, we conclude the tokens of death are upon him.

So when ſinners have no ſence of their ſpiritual condition, it is plain that they are dead in ſin, the tokens of eternal death are upon them.

Theſe things being premiſed (which I deſire you would carry along in your mind while we travel through this ſubject) I come to ſpeak to the propoſition more diſtinctly and cloſely.

That there are very many in the world, that are almoſt, and yet but almoſt Chriſtians. *Doct.*

I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the propoſition, and then proceed to a more diſtinct proſecution.

1. I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the propoſition, and I ſhall do it by Scripture evidence, which ſpeaks plain and fully to the caſe.

1. The young man in the Goſpel is an eminent proof of this truth, in *Mat.* 19. from the 16, to the 23. *verſe.* There you read of one that came to

Chriſt to learn of him the way to
v. 16. Heaven. *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do that I may have eternal life?*

v. 17. Our Lord Chriſt tells him, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandements*; and when Chriſt tels him which; he
v. 20. Anſwers, *Lord, all theſe have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

Now do but ſee how far this man went.

1. *He obeyed*] he did not onely hear the Commands of God, but he kept
Luk. 11. 8 them, now the Scripture ſaith *bleſſed is he that hears the Word of God, and keeps it.*

2. *He obeyed univerſally*] not this or that command, but both this and that, he did not halve it with God, or pick and chuſe which were eaſieſt to be done, and leave the reſt, no, but he obeys all, *all theſe things have I kept.*

3. *He obeyed conſtantly*] not in a fit of zeal onely, but in a continued ſe-
Hoſ. 6. 4. ries of duty, his goodneſs was not (as *Ephraims*) *like the morning dew, that paſſes away*, no, *all theſe things have I kept from my youth up.*

4 *He profeſſeth his deſire to know and do more*] *to perfect that which was lacking* of his obedience, and therefore he goes to Chriſt, to inſtruct him in his duty; Maſter, *what lack I yet?* Now would you not think this a good man? alaſs how few go thus far!

And yet as far as he went, he went not far enough; he was almoſt, and yet but almoſt a Chriſtian, for he was an unſound Hypocrite, he forſakes Chriſt at laſt and cleaves to his luſt. v. 22.

This then is a full proof of the truth of the Doctrine.

A ſecond proof of it is that of the Parable of the Virgins, *Mat.* 25. 1. and ſo on.

See what a Progreſs they make, how far they go, in a profeſſion of Chriſt.

1. *They are called Virgins*] now this is a name given in the Scripture, both in the Old Teſtament, and New, to the Saints of Chriſt, *Cant.* 1. 3. *The Virgins love thee*, ſo *Revel.* 14. 4. the One hundred forty and four thouſand that ſtood with the Lamb on Mount *Sion*, are called *Virgins*. Pſal. 45. 14. 2 Cor. 11. 2, 3.

They are called *Virgins* becauſe they
2 Pet.1.4. are not defiled with *the corruptions that are in the World through luſt.*

Now theſe here ſeem to be of that
Mat.25.1. ſort, for they are called *Virgins.*

v.3. 2. *They take their Lamps*] that is, they made a profeſſion of Chriſt.

Hi ſunt non qualeſcunque animæ ſed tales quæ habent catholicam fidem, & habere videntur bona opera in eccleſia dei. Aug. De ver. Dom. Ser. 1.

3. *They had ſome kind of Oyl in their Lamps*] as appears *v.*8. they had ſome convictions, and ſome faith (though not the faith of Gods elect) to keep their profeſſion alive, to keep the Lamp burning.

4. *They went*] their profeſſion was not an idle profeſſion, they did perform duties, frequent ordinances, and do many things commanded, they made
v. 1. a progreſs, *they went.*

5. *They went forth*] they went, and out went, they left many behind them, this ſpeaks out their ſeparation from the World.

6. *They went with the wiſe Virgins*] they joyned themſelves to thoſe who had joyned themſelves to the Lord, and were the Companions of them that were the Companions of
Cant.1.7 Chriſt.

7. *They go forth to meet the Bridegroom*] this ſpeaks out their owning and ſeeking after Chriſt.

8. When they heard the cry of the bridegroom comming, *they aroſe, and trimmed their Lamps*; they profeſs Chriſt more highly, hoping now to go in with the Bridegroom. v. 7.

9. *They ſought for true grace*] now, don't we ſay the deſires of grace, are grace? and ſo they are, if true and timely, if ſound and ſeaſonable.

Why lo here a deſire of grace in theſe Virgins, *give us of your Oyl.*

It was a deſire of true grace, but it was not a true deſire of grace; it was not true becauſe not timely, unſound as being unſeaſonable; it was too late. v. 8.

Their folly was in not taking Oyl when they took their lamps, their time of ſeeking grace was when they came to Chriſt, it was too late to ſeek it when Chriſt came to them. They ſhould have ſought for that, when they took up their profeſſion; it was too late to ſeek it at the coming of the Bridegroom.

And therefore *they were ſhut out*, v. 10.
and though they cry for entrance, v. 11.
Lord, Lord, open to us, yet the Lord v. 12.
Chriſt tells them, *I know you not.*

You ſee how far theſe Virgins go in a profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, and how long they continue in it, even till the Bridegroom came; they go to the very doors of Heaven; and there (like the *Sodomites*) periſh with their hands upon the very threſholds of glory.

They were *almoſt Chriſtians*, and yet but *almoſt*; Almoſt ſaved and yet periſh.

You that are profeſſors of the Goſpel of Chriſt, ſtand and tremble, if they that have gone beyond us fall ſhort of Heaven, what ſhall become of us that fall ſhort of them?

If they that are Virgins, that profeſs Chriſt, that have ſome faith in their profeſſion (ſuch as it is) that have ſome fruit in their faith, that outſtrip others, that ſeek Chriſt, that improve their profeſſion, and ſuit themſelves to their profeſſion, nay; that ſeek grace; if ſuch as theſe be but *almoſt Chriſtians*, Lord, what then are we?

If theſe two witneſſes be not ſufficient to prove the truth, and confirm the credit of the propoſition;

Take a third, and that ſhall be from the Old Teſtament. *Iſa.* 58. 2. ſee what God ſaith of that people; he gives them a very high Character for a choice people one would think.

They ſeek me daily, they delight to know my way, as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, and forſook not the Ordinance of their God; they ask of me the Ordinances of Juſtice; they take delight in approaching to God.

See how far theſe went; if God had not ſaid they were rotten and unſound, we ſhould have took them for the *Hee Goats before the Flock*, and ranked them among the worthies; pray obſerve. Jer. 50, 8.

1. *They ſeek God*] Now this is the proper Character of a true Saint, to ſeek God. True Saints are call'd ſeekers of God. *This is the generation of them that ſeek him, that ſeek thy face O Jacob*, or O God of *Jacob*. Pſal, 24 6.

Lo here a generation of them that ſeek God, and are not theſe the Saints of God? Nay farther,

2. *They ſeek him dayly*] here's diligence backed with continuance יום יום, *day, by day,* that is every day from day to day: They did not ſeek him by fits and girds; nor in a time of trouble and affliction onely as many do.

Lord, in trouble have they viſited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chaſtening was upon them, *Iſa.* 26. 16. Many when God *viſits* them, then they *viſit* him, but not till then; when God poureth out his afflictions, then they pour out their ſupplications. This is Seamens devotion, when the ſtorms have brought them *to their wits end,*
Jonah 7.5. *then they cry to the Lord in their trouble,* *Pſal.* 107. 27, 28. many never cry to God till they are at their wits end, they never come to God for help, ſo long as they can help themſelves.

But now theſe here, whom God ſpeaks of are more zealous in their devotion, the others make a vertue of neceſſity, but theſe ſeem to make conſcience of duty, for ſaith God, *they ſeek me dayly.*

Sure this is(one would think)a note of ſincerity.

Job ſaith of the *Hypocrite*, *will he always call upon God?* ſurely no, but now this people call upon God always, *they ſeek him dayly*, certainly theſe are no Hypocrites. Iob. 27.10

3. Saith God, *They delight to know my ways*] ſure this frees them from the ſuſpicion of Hypocriſie, for *Job* 21. 14. *they ſay unto God depart from us, we deſire not the knowledg of thy ways.*

4. *They are as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs*] not onely as a Nation that ſpake Righteouſneſs, or knew Righteouſneſs, or profeſſed Righteouſneſs, but as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, that practiſed nothing but what was juſt and right. They appeared to the judgment of the World as good as the beſt.

5. *They forſook not the Ordinances of their God*] they ſeem true to their Principles, conſtant to their profeſſion, better then many among us, that caſt off duties, and forſake the Ordi-

nances of God; but theſe hold out in their profeſſion, *they forſook not the Ordinances of God.*

6. *They ask of me* (ſaith God) *the Ordinances of Juſtice*] they will not make their own wils the rule of right and wrong, but the Law and will of God, and therefore in all their dealings with men, they deſire to be guided and counſelled by God. *They ask of me the Ordinances of juſtice.*

7. *They take delight in approaching to God*] ſure this can't be the guiſe of a Hypocrite, *will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?* ſaith *Job*: no, he will not. Iob. 27.10

Though God is the cheif delight of man, (having everything in him to render him lovely, as was ſaid of *Titus Veſpaſian*) yet the Hypocrite will not delight in God. *Deliciæ humani generis.*

Till the affections are made ſpiritual, there is no affection to things that are ſpiritual, God is a ſpiritual good, and therefore Hypocrites can't delight in God. But theſe are a people that delight in approaching to God. *Hypocrita neq; deum neq; divina habet in deliciis.*

8. They were a people that were much in faſting, as you may ſee *verſ.* 3. *wherefore have we faſted* (ſay they) *and thou ſeeſt not?* Now this is a duty that doth not ſuppoſe and require truth of grace onely in the heart, but ſtrength of grace.

No man (ſaith our Lord Chriſt) *puts new Wine into Old bottles, leaſt the bottles break, and the Wine runs out.* Mat. 9. 17

New wine is ſtrong, and Old bottles weak, and the ſtrong Wine breaks the weak veſſel, this is a reaſon Chriſt gives, why his Diſciples who were newly converted (and but weak as yet) were not exerciſed with this Auſtere Diſcipline.

But this people here mentioned were a people that faſted often, *afflicted their ſouls* much, wore themſelves out by frequent practices of humiliation.

Aſſemblys annot. upon the place.

Sure therefore this *was new Wine, in new bottles*, this muſt needs be a people ſtrong in grace; here ſeems to be grace not onely in truth, but alſo in growth.

And yet for all this, they were no better then a Generation of Hypocrites, they made a goodly progreſs, and went far, but yet they went not far enough, they were caſt off by God after all. I hope by this time the truth of the point is ſufficiently avouched, and confirmed, that a man may be (yea very many are) almoſt, and yet (no more then) but almoſt Chriſtians.

Now for the more diſtinct proſecution of the point.

1. *I ſhall ſhew you ſtep by ſtep, how far a man may go, what attainments he may reach unto, how ſpecious and ſingular a progreſs he may make in Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, when all is done.*

2. *I will ſhew you, whence it is, that many men go ſo far as that they are almoſt Chriſtians.*

3. *Why they are but almoſt Chriſtians, when they have gone thus far.*

4. *What the reaſon is, why men that go thus far as to be almoſt Chriſtians, yet go no farther then to be almoſt Chriſtians.*

1. *How far may a man go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian?* Queſt.

This I ſhall ſhew you in twenty ſeveral ſteps. *Anſw.*

1. *A man may have much knowledge, much light, he may know much of God, and his Will, much of Chriſt, and his ways*, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.* 7 18

For though there can be no grace without knowledge; yet there may be much knowledge vvhere there is no grace; illumination often goes before, vvhen converſion never follovvs after. The Subject of knovvledge is the underſtanding, the ſubject of holineſs is the Will.

Novv a man may have his underſtanding inlightened, and yet his vvill not at all ſanctified.

He may have an underſtanding to knovv God, and yet vvant a vvill to obey God. The Apoſtle tells us of ſome that *when they knew God, yet they glorified him not as God.* Rom. 1. 21.

To make a man altogether a Chriſtian; there muſt be light in the head, and heat in the heart, knowledg in the underſtanding, and zeal in the affections.

Some have zeal and no knowledge, that is blind devotion, ſome have *knowledge* and no *zeal*, that is fruitleſs ſpeculation. But where knowledge is joyned with zeal, that makes a true Chriſtian.

Object. But is it not ſaid? *this is life eternal to know the onely true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent? John* 17. 3.

Sol. It is not every knowlege of God and Chriſt that intereſts the ſoul in life eternal. For why then do the Devils periſh? they have more knowledge of God then all the men in the World; for though by their fall they loſt their Holineſs, yet they loſt not their knowledge.

They are called Δαίμονες from their knowledge, and yet they are Διάβολοι for their malice, Devils ſtill.

Knowledge may fill the head; but it will never better the heart, if there be not ſomewhat elſe. The *Phariſee* had much knowledge. *Behold thou art called*

led a Jew, and reſteſt in the Law, and makeſt thy boaſt of God, and knoweſt his will, &c. and yet they were a Generation of Hypocrites. Rom.2.17 18.

Alaſs, how many have gone loaded with knowledge to hell?

Sinite Sapientes hujus mundi ſapienter deſcendere ad infernum

Though it is true, that it is life eternal to know God and Jeſus Chriſt, yet it is as true that many do know God and Jeſus Chriſt, that ſhall never ſee life eternal.

There is, you muſt know, a two fold knowledge, one is common but not ſaving, the other is not common but ſaving; common knowledge is that which floats in the head, but doth not influence nor affect the heart.

This knowledge reprobates may have; *Balaam* ſaw Chriſt *from the top of the Rocks, and from the Hills.* Num.23.10

Naturaliſts ſay, that there is a pearl in the Toads head, and yet her belly is full of Poyſon. The *French* have a Berry whieq they call *uve de ſpine*, the grape of a Thorn.

The common knowledge of Chriſt is the pearl in the Toads head, the grape that grows upon Thorns, it may be found in men unſanctified.

And then there is a ſaving knowledge of God and Chriſt, which doth include the aſſent of the mind, and the conſent of the will, this is a knowledge that implies faith, *by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtifie many.* Iſa. 53. 11.

And this is that knowledge, which leads to life eternal: now whatever that meaſure of knowledge is, which a man may have of God, and of Jeſus Chriſt, yet if it be not this ſaving knowledge, knowledge joyned with affection and application, he is but almoſt a Chriſtian.

He onely knows God aright, who knows how to obey him, and obeys according to his knowledge of him, *a good underſtanding have all they that do his commandements.* Pſ. 111. 10

All knowledge without this, makes a man but like *Nebuchadnezzers Image,* with *a Head of Gold, and Feet of Clay.*

Some know, but to know,
Some know, to be known,

Some know, to practiſe what they
know.
Now to know, but to know, that's
curioſity.
To know, to be known, that's vain
glory.
But to know, to practiſe what we
know, that is Goſpel duty.

This makes a man a compleat Chriſtian, the other without this makes a man *almoſt*, and yet *but almoſt* a Chriſtian.

2. *A man may have great and eminent gifts, yea ſpiritual gifts*, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.* The gift of prayer is a ſpiritual gift, now this a man may have, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, for the gift of prayer is one thing, the grace of prayer is another. 2d

The gift of Preaching and prophecying is a ſpiritual gift, now this a man may have, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian. Judas* was a great Preacher, ſo were they that came to Chriſt and ſaid, *Lord, Lord, we have prophecyed in thy name, and in thy name caſt out Devils, &c.* 1 Cor. 12.10 Mat. 7.22.

You muſt know that it is not gifts;

but grace which makes a Chriſtian. For,

1. Gifts are from a common work of the ſpirit, now a man may partake of all the common gifts of the ſpirit, and yet be a reprobate; for therefore they are called common, becauſe they are indifferently diſpenſed by the ſpirit to good and bad, to them that are beleivers, and to them that are not.

They that have grace, have gifts, and they that have no grace may have the ſame gifts, for the ſpirit works in both; nay in this ſenſe, he that hath no grace may be under a greater work of the ſpirit (*quoad hoc*) as to this thing, then he that hath moſt grace; a graceleſs profeſſour may have greater gifts, then the moſt holy beleiver. He may out-pray, and out-preach, and out-do them, that in ſincerity and integrity out-go him.

2. Gifts are for the uſe and good of others, they are given *in ordine ad alium*, as the School men ſpeak; for the profiting and edifying of others,

ſo ſays the Apoſtle, 1 Cor. 12.7. *They are given to profit withal.*

Ephes. 4. 12. *Dona dantur in adjutorium gratiæ.*

Now a man may edifie another by his gifts, and yet be unedified himſelf: He may be profitable to another, and yet unprofitable to himſelf.

A lame man may with his crutch point to thee the right way, and yet not be able to walk in it himſelf: A crooked Taylor may make a ſuit to fit a ſtrait body, though it fit not him that made it, becauſe of his crookedneſs.

The Raven was an unclean bird yet God makes uſe of her to feed *Eliah*, though ſhe was not good meat, yet it was good meat ſhe brought.

The Church (Chriſt Garden incloſed) may be watered through a wooden gutter: The Sun may give light through a ſluttiſh window; and the field may be well ſowed with a dirty hand.

The efficacy of the Word doth not depend upon the authority of him that ſpeaks it, but upon the authority of the God that bleſſes it. So that another may be converted by my preaching, and yet I may be a *caſtaway* notwithſtanding. *Balaam* makes a clear and rare propheſie of Chriſt, and yet

1 Cor. 9. 27.

hath he no benefit by Chriſt, *There ſhall come a Star out of* Jacob, *and a Septer ſhall riſe out of* Iſrael. But yet *Balaam* ſhall have no benefit by it, *I ſhall ſee him but not now, I ſhall behold him but not nigh. Numb.* 24. 17.

God may uſe a mans gifts to bring another unto Chriſt, when he himſelf whoſe gifts God uſes, may be a ſtranger unto Chriſt, one man may confirm another in the faith & yet himſelf may be a ſtranger to the faith. *Pendleton* ſtrengthens and confirms *Saunders*, in Queen *Maries* days, to ſtand in the truth he had Preached. and to ſeal it with his blood, and yet afterwards plays the Apoſtate himſelf.

Acts & Mon laſt Edit. 3. vol. p. 141.

Scultetus tells us of one *Joannes Speiſerus* a famous Preacher at *Ausborough* in *Germany*, in the year 1523. who Preached the Goſpel ſo powerfully that divers common *Harlots* were converted, and became good Chriſtians, and yet himſelf afterwards turned Papiſt, and came to a miſerable end.

Scultet. *Annal.* p. 118,

v.

Thus the candle may burn bright to light others in their Work, and yet afterwards go out in a ſtink.

3. It is beyond the power of the greateſt gifts to change the heart, a man may Preach like an Apoſtle, pray like an Angel, and yet may have the heart of a Devil. It is grace onely that can change the heart, the greateſt gifts can't change it, but the leaſt grace can; gifts may make a man a Scholar, but grace makes a man a beleiver.

Now if gifts can't change the heart, then a man may have the greateſt gifts, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

4. Many have gone loaden with gifts to Hell, no doubt *Judas* had great gifts, for he was a Preacher of the Goſpel, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt would not ſet him in the work, and not fit him for the work, yet *Judas is gone to his own place*; the *Scribes* and *Phariſes* were men of great gifts, and yet *where is the wiſe? where is the Scribe.* 1 Cor. 1. 20.

The Preaching of the Croſs is to them that periſh fooliſhneſs. 1 Cor. 1. 18.

Them that periſh, who are they? who? the wiſe and the Learned, both among *Jews* and *Greeks*, theſe are called *them that periſh*. *Surgunt indocti & rapiunt cælum, dum nos cum doctrina noſtra in Gehennam detrudimur*, ſaid a great Biſhop, when he ſaw a poor Shepheard weeping over a Toad. The poor illiterate World attain to Heaven, while we with all our learning fall into Hell.

There are three things muſt be done for us if ever we would avoid periſhing.

We muſt be throughly convinced of ſin.

We muſt be really united to Chriſt.

We muſt be inſtated in the Covenant of grace.

Now the greateſt gifts cannot ſtead us in any one of theſe.

They cannot work through convictions.

They cannot effect our union.

They cannot bring us into Covenant relation.

And conſequently they cannot preſerve from eternal periſhing, and if ſo, then a man may have the greateſt gifts, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

5. Gifts may decay and periſh, they do not lie beyond the reach of corruption, indeed grace ſhall never periſh; but gifts will, grace is incorruptible, though gifts are not; grace is *a ſpring whoſe waters fail not*, but the ſtream of gifts may be dryed up. If grace be corruptible in its own nature, as being but a Creature, yet it is incorruptible in regard of its conſerver, as being the new creature; he that did create it in us, will conſerve it for us, he that did begin it will alſo finiſh it. Joh.4.14. Iſa.58.11

Gifts have their root in nature, but grace hath its root in Chriſt, and therefore though gifts may die and wither, yet grace ſhall abide for ever. Heb.12.2

Now if gifts are periſhing, then (though he that hath the leaſt grace is a Chriſtian, yet) he that hath the greateſt gifts, may be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Object. But doth not the Apoſtle bid us? *covet earneſtly the beſt gifts*, 1 *Cor.*12.31. why muſt we covet them? and covet them earneſtly, if they avail not to ſalvation?

Gifts are good, though they are not the beſt good; they are excellent, but there is ſomewhat more excellent, ſo it follows in the ſame verſe, *yet I ſhew unto you a more excellent way*, and that is the way of grace; one dram of grace is more worth then a talent of gifts; gifts may make us rich towards men, but it is grace that makes us *rich towards God.* Luk. 12. 21.

Our gifts profit others, but grace profits our ſelves; that whereby I profit another is good, but that whereby I am profited my ſelf is better.

Now becauſe gifts are good, therefore we ought to covet them, but becauſe they are not the beſt good, therefore we ought not to reſt in them; we muſt covet gifts for the good of others, that they may be edified, and we muſt covet grace for the good of our own ſouls, that they may be ſaved; for whoever be bettered by our gifts, yet we ſhall miſcarry without grace.

3

3. *A man may have a high profeſſion of Religion, be much in externall duties of godlineſs, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

ſtian. Mark what our Lord Chriſt tells them in *Mat.* 7. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, that is, not every one that makes a profeſſion of Chriſt, ſhall therefore be owned for a true Diſciple of Chriſt.

All are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael, nor are all Chriſtians that make a profeſſion of Religion. Rom. 9 6

What a goodly profeſſion had *Judas*, he followed Chriſt, left all for Chriſt, he Preached the Goſpel of Chriſt, he caſt out Devils in the name of Chriſt, he eat and dranck at the Table of Chriſt, and yet *Judas* was but a Hypocrite.

Moſt profeſſors are like Lillies, fair in ſhew, but foul in ſent; or like Pepper, hot in the mouth, but cold in the ſtomack. The fineſt lace may be upon the courſeſt cloth.

It is a great deceit to meaſure the ſubſtance of our Religion, by the bulk of our profeſſion; and to judge of the ſtrength of our graces by the length of our duties. The Scriptures ſpeak of ſome who having *a forme of* *godlineſs yet deny the power thereof.* Deny the power, that is they don't live in the practiſe of thoſe graces, which they pretend to in their duties, he that pretends to godlineſs, by a ſpecious profeſſion, and yet doth not practice godlineſs, by a Holy converſation, he *hath a forme but denies the power.* 2 Tim. 3. 5.

Loquitur hic ut piſo, vivit ut Gallonius.

Hugo compares ſuch to the Oſtrich, *qui alas habet ſed non volat*, which hath great wings, but yet flies not, many have the wings of a fair profeſſion, but yet uſe them not to mount upward in ſpiritual affections, and a Heavenly converſation.

But to clear the truth of this, that a man may make a high profeſſion of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, take a four fold evidence.

1. If a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate better'd, then he may be a great profeſſor, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

But a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate renewed.

He may be a conſtant hearer of the word, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; he may come often to the Lords Table, and yet go away a ſinner as he came, we muſt not think that duties, *ex opere operato* can confer grace.

Many a ſoul hath been converted by Chriſt in an Ordinance, but never was any ſoul converted by an Ordinance without Chriſt.

And doth Chriſt convert all that ſit under the ordinances? ſurely no, for to ſome *the word is a ſavour of death unto death.* 1 Cor. 2. 16.

And if ſo then it is plain, that a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

2. A man may profeſs Religion and live in a forme of godlineſs in Hypocriſie. *Iſaiah* 48. 1. *Hear ye this, O Houſe of* Jacob, *which are called by the name of* Iſrael, *and are come forth out of the waters of* Judah, *which ſware by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of* Iſrael, *but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs.* what do ye think of theſe? *they make mention of the Name of the Lord*, there

is their profeſſion; *but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs*, there is their diſſimulation; and indeed their could be no hypocriſie in a Religious ſence, were it not for a profeſſion of Religion; for he that is wicked, and carnal, and vile, inwardly, and appears to be ſo outwardly, he is no Hypocrite, but is what he appears, and appears what he is

Hypocrita cupit videri juſtus.

But he that is one thing really, and another thing ſeemingly; is carnal and unholy, and yet ſeems to be good and holy, he is an hypocrite.

Tollet inſtit. Sacerd. l. 8. c. 9.

Thus the *Caſuiſts* define hypocriſie to be *ſimulatio ſanctitatis*, a counterfeiting of Holineſs, and this fits exactly with the Greek word ὑπόκρισις, which is from ὑποκρίνομαι, to counterfeit..

פנים
חנפים from the root חנף

And to this purpoſe the Hebrews have too words for Hypocrites, *panim* which ſignifies *facies*, and *Chanephim*, which ſignifies *counterfeits*, from *chanaph* to diſſemble; ſo that he is an hypocrite that diſſembles Religion, and weareth the face of holineſs, and yet is without the grace of holineſs, he appears to be in ſemblance, what he is not in ſubſtance, he wears a forme of godlineſs without, onely as a cover of a prophane heart within.

He hath a *profeſſion* that he may not be thought wicked, but it is but a *profeſſion*, and therefore he is wicked.

He is the religious Hypocrite, *religious*, becauſe he pretends to it, and yet a *Hypocrite*, becauſe he doth but pretend to it; he is like many men in a Conſumption, that have freſh looks, and yet rotten Lungs: or like an apple that hath a skin fair, but a rotten coar, many appear righteous, who are onely righteous in appearance.

And if ſo, then a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

3. Cuſtome and faſhion may create a man a profeſſor, as you have many that wear this or that garb, not becauſe it keeps them warmer, or hath any excellency in it, more then another, but meerly for faſhion.

Many muſt have powdered hair, ſpotted faces, feathers in their Caps, *&c.* for no other end but becauſe they would be fools in faſhion.

So many profeſs chriſtianity, not becauſe the means of grace warms the heart, or that they ſee any excellency in the ways of God above the world, but meerly to follow the faſhion; I wiſh I might not ſay it hath been true of our days, becauſe Religion hath been uppermoſt, therefore many have profeſſed it, it hath been the gaining trade, and then moſt would be of that trade.

Religion in credit makes many profeſſors but few proſelites, but when religion ſuffers then its confeſſors are no more then its converts; for cuſtome makes the former, but conſcience the latter.

He that is a Profeſſor of Religion, meerly for cuſtome ſake, when it proſpers; will never be a Martyr for Chriſts ſake, when Religion ſuffers.

He that owns the truth to live upon that, will diſown it, when it comes to live upon him.

They ſay that when a houſe is decaying and falling, all the Rats and

Mice will forſake it, while the houſe is firme and they may ſhelter in the rooff, they'l ſtay, but no longer, leſt in the decay the fall ſhould be upon them, and they that lived at top, ſhould lye at bottome.

My brethren may I not ſay we have many that are the vermine, the Rats and Mice of Religion, that would live under the roof of it, while they might have ſhelter in it, but when it ſuffers forſake it, leaſt it ſhould fall, and the fall ſhould be upon them, I am perſwaded this is not the leaſt reaſon why God hath brought the wheel upon the profeſſion of Religion, *viz.* to rid it of the vermine.

He ſhakes the foundation of the houſe, that theſe Rats and Mice may quit the roof, not to overturne it, but to rid them out of it, as the Husbandman fans the Wheat, that he may get rid of the Chaff. The Halcyon days of the Goſpel provoke Hyyocriſie, but the ſufferings of Religion prove ſincerity.

Now then if cuſtome and faſhion make many men profeſſours, then a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

4. If many may periſh under a profeſſion of godlineſs, then a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Now the Scripture is clear, that a man may periſh under the higheſt profeſſion of Religion, *Chriſt curſed the Fig tree that had leaves and no fruit*, It is ſaid, *Mat.* 8. 12. *That the Children of the Kingdome ſhall be caſt out into outer Darkneſs.* who were theſe? but they that were then the onely people of God in the World, by profeſſion, *that had made a Covenant with him by ſacrifice*, and yet theſe caſt out. Pſal. 50. 5.

In *Mat.* 7. 22. you read of ſome that came and made boaſt of their profeſſion to Chriſt, hoping that might ſave them. *Lord* (ſay they) *have we not prophecyed in thy name, caſt out Devils in thy name, done many wonderful works in thy name.* Mat. 7. v. 22.

Now what ſaith our Lord Chriſt to this? *Then I will profeſs unto them I never knew you, depart from me.* v. 23.

Mark, here are them that prophecy in his name, and yet periſh in his wrath, in his name caſt out Devils, and then are caſt out themſelves; in his name do many wonderful works, and yet periſh for wicked workers.

The profeſſion of Religion will no more keep a man from periſhing, then calling a Ship the Safeguard, or the Good-ſpeed will keep her from drowning.

As many go to Heaven with the fear of Hell in their hearts, ſo many go to Hell with the name of Chriſt in their Mouths.

Now then if many may periſh under a profeſſion of godlineſs, then may a man be a high profeſſor of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Object. But is it not ſaid by the Lord Chriſt himſelf, *he that confeſſes me before men, him will I confeſs before my Father in Heaven.* Mat. 10. 32.

Now for Chriſt to ſay he will confeſs us before the father, is equivalent to a promiſe of eternal life, for if Jeſus Chriſt confeſs us, God the Father will never diſown us.

Sol. True, they that confeſs Chriſt, ſhall be confeſſed by him, and it is as true, that this confeſſion is equivalent to a promiſe of ſalvation.

But now you muſt know, that profeſſing Chriſt, is not confeſſing him, for to profeſs Chriſt is one thing, to confeſs Chriſt is another, confeſſion is a living teſtimony for Chriſt, in a time when Religion ſuffers, profeſſion may be onely a lifeleſs formallity in a time when Religion proſpers.

To confeſs Chriſt is to chuſe his ways and own them, to profeſs Chriſt is to plead for his ways, and yet live beſides them.

Profeſſion may be from a feigned love to the ways of Chriſt, but confeſſion is from a rooted love to the Perſon of Chriſt.

To profeſs Chriſt, is to own him when none deny him, to confeſs Chriſt is to plead for him and ſuffer for him when others oppoſe him, Hypocrites may be profeſſors, but the Martyrs are the true confeſſors, profeſſion is a ſwimming down the ſtream, confeſſion on is a ſwimming againſt the ſtream.)

Now many may ſwim with the ſtream (like the dead fiſh) that cannot ſwim againſt the ſtream with the living fiſh, many may profeſs Chriſt, that can't confeſs Chriſt, and ſo notwithſtanding their profeſſion yet are but almoſt Chriſtians.

4th

4. To come yet nearer, *A man may go far in oppoſing his ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* How far a man may go in this work, I ſhall ſhew you in ſeven Gradual inſtances.

1:

Firſt, *A man may be convinced of ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian,* For,

1. Conviction may be rational as well as ſpiritual, it may be from a natural conſcience enlightned by the word, without the effectual work of the Spirit applying ſin to the heart.

2. Convictions may be worn out; they many times go off, and end not in ſound converſion, ſaith the Church, *we have been with Child, we*

have

have been in pain, we have brought forth wind. Iſa. 26.18

This is the complaint of the Church in reference to the unprofitableneſs of their afflictions, and it may be the complaint of moſt in reference to the unprofitableneſs of their convictions.

3. many take convictions of ſin, to be converſion from ſin, and ſo ſit down and reſt in their conviction. That is a ſad complaint God makes of *Ephraim*, *Ephraim is an unwiſe ſon, for he ſhould not ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children.* Hoſ. 13. 13. Now then, if convictions may be onely from natural conſcience, if they may be worn out, or may be miſtaken, and reſted in for converſion, then a man may have convictions, and be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

2. Secondly, *A man may mourn for ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, ſo did *Saul*, ſo did *Eſau*, for the loſs of his birthright, which was his ſin, and therefore he is called by the ſpirit of God *prophane Eſau*, yet he ſought it Heb. 12. 16, 17.

again carefully *with tears.*

Object. But doth not Chriſt pronounce them bleſſed that mourn, *Mat.* 5. 4. *Bleſſed are they that mourn?*

Sure then if a man mourn for ſin, he is in a good condition; you ſee, ſaith *Nazianzen*, τῷ στεναγμῷ τὴν σωτηρίαν συνεζευγμένην that ſalvation is joyned with ſorrow.

Greg. Naz. orat. 17.

Sol. I anſwer, it is true, that they who mourn for ſin in the ſence Chriſt there ſpeaks of are bleſſed; but all mourning for ſin, doth not therefore render us bleſſed.

1. True mourning for ſin, muſt flow from ſpiritual conviction of the evil, and vileneſs, and damnable nature of ſin.

Now all that mourn for ſin don't do it from a through work of ſpiritual conviction upon the ſoul, they have not a right ſenſe of the evil and vileneſs of ſin.

2. True mourning for ſin, is more for the evil that is in ſin, then the evil that comes by ſin; more becauſe it diſhonours God, and wounds Chriſt, and grieves the Spirit, and makes

the ſoul unlike God, then becauſe it damns the ſoul.

Now there are many that mourn for ſin, not ſo much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it; there is mourning for ſin in Hell, you read *of weeping and wailing* there. Mat. 8. 12

The damned are weeping and mourning to eternity, there is all ſorrow, and no comfort, as in Heaven their is peace without trouble, joy without mourning, ſo in Hell there is trouble without peace, mourning without joy, weeping and wailing inceſſantly, but it is for the evil they feel by ſin, and not for the evil that is in ſin.

So that a man may mourn for ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, it may grieve him to think of periſhing for ſin, when it doth not greive him that he is defiled and polluted by ſin.

3. Thirdly, *A man may make large confeſſion of ſin, to God, to others, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

How ingenuouſly doth *Saul* confeſs his ſin to *David*, *I have ſinned* (ſaith he) *thou art more righteous then I. Behold I have played the fool*, *and have erred exceedingly.* 1Sam.24. 17. & 26. 21.

So *Judas* makes a full confeſſion, *I have ſinned in betraying innocent blood.* Mat 27.4

Yet *Saul* and *Judas* were both rejected of God; ſo that a man may confeſs ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Object. But is not confeſſion of ſin, a character of a child of God? doth not the Apoſtle ſay, *if we confeſs our ſins, God is juſt and faithful to forgive them?* No man was ever kept out of Heaven for his confeſſed badneſs, though many are kept out of Heaven for their ſuppoſed goodneſs. 1 Joh.1.9 *Peccatorum confeſſio ſynecdochice univerſam penitentiam hoc loco ſignificat.* Vorſt. in loc.

Judah in *Hebrews*, ſignifies *confeſſion*, now *Judah* got the Kingdom from *Reuben*; confeſſion of ſin is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Sol. There are ſome that confeſs ſin and are ſaved, there are others that confeſs ſin and periſh.

1. Many confeſs ſin meerly out of cuſtome, and not out of conſcience,

you

you ſhall have many that will never pray but they will make a long confeſſion of ſin, and yet never feel the weight or burden of it upon their conſciences.

2. Many will confeſs leſſer ſins, and yet conceal greater, like the Patient in *Plutarch*, that complained to his Phyſitian of his finger, when his Liver was rotten.

3. Many will confeſs ſin in the general, or confeſs themſelves ſinners, and yet ſee little, and ſay leſs, of their particular ſins; an implicite confeſſion (as one ſaith) is almoſt as bad as an implicite faith.

Where confeſſion is right, it will be diſtinſt, eſpecially of thoſe ſins that were our cheif ſins.

Pſal.51. 4,14. 1 Tim. 1. 13,15.

So *David confeſſes his blood guiltineſs, and adultery*; ſo *Paul*, his *blaſphemy perſecution*, and *injury againſt the Saints*. It is bad to hear men confeſs they are great ſinners, and yet can't confeſs their ſins.

Though the leaſt ſin be too bad to be committed, yet there is no ſin too bad to be confeſſed.

4. Many will confeſs ſin, but it is onely under extremity, that is not free and voluntary, *Pharoah* confeſſes his ſin, but it was when judgment compelled him.

I have ſinned againſt the Lord, ſaith he, but it was when he had had eight plagues upon him. Exod. 10. 16.

Many do by their ſins, as Marriners do by their goods, caſt them out in a ſtorme, wiſhing for them again in a calm; confeſſion ſhould come like water out of a ſpring, which runs freely, not like water out of a ſtill, which is forced by fire.

5. Many confeſs their ſins, but with no intent to forſake ſin, they confeſs the ſins they have committed, but don't leave the ſins they have confeſſed.

Many men uſe confeſſion as *Lewis* the eleventh of *France* did his Crucifix, he would ſwear an Oath, and then kiſs it, and ſwear again, and then kiſs it again.

So many ſin, and then confeſs they do not well, but yet never ſtrive to do better.

Mr. *Torſhel* tells a ſtory of a Miniſter he knew, that would be often drunk, and when he came into the Pulpit, would confeſs it very lamentingly, and yet no ſooner was he out of the Pulpit, but he would be drunk again, and this would he do as conſtantly as men follow their trades.

Now then if a man may confeſs ſin, meerly out of cuſtome, if he may confeſs leſſer ſins, and yet conceal greater, if he may confeſs ſin onely in the general, or onely under extremity, or if he may confeſs ſin, without any intent to forſake ſin, then ſurely a man may confeſs ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

4. Fourthly, *A man may forſake ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, he may leave his luſt and his wicked ways which he ſometimes lived in, and in the judgement of the world become a new man, and yet not be a new creature. *Simon Magus* when he hears *Philip* preaching concerning the Kingdom of God, leaves his ſorcery and witchcraft, and beleeves. Act. 8, 13.

Object. But youl ſay, this ſeems contrary to Scripture, for that ſays, *He that confeſſes and forſakes ſin ſhall have mercy*: But I confeſs ſin, yea, not only ſo, but I alſo forſake ſin, ſure therefore this mercy is my portion, it belongs to me. Prov. 28. 13.

Sol. It is true, that where the ſoul forſakes ſin from a right principle, after a right manner, to a right end; where he forſakes ſin as ſin, as being contrary to God, and the purity of his nature.

This declares that Soul to be right with God, and the promiſe ſhall be made good to it, *he ſhall finde mercy.*

But now pray mind, there is a forſaking ſin that is not right but unſound.

1. Open ſins may be deſerted, and yet ſecret ſins may be retained; now this is not a right forſaking, ſuch a ſoul ſhall never finde mercy: A man may be cured of a wound in his fleſh, and yet may die of an impoſtume in his bowels.

2. A man may forſake ſin but not as ſin; for he that forſakes ſin as ſin,

forſakes all ſin; *à quatenus ad omne valet conſequentia*: It is impoſſible for a man to forſake ſin as ſin, unleſs he forſakes all that he knows to be ſin.

3. A man may let one ſin go to hold another the faſter; as a man that goes to ſea, would willingly ſave all his goods, but if the ſtorm ariſes that he cannot, then he throws ſome overboard to lighten the veſſel, and ſave the reſt. So did they *Acts* 27. 38.

So the ſinner chuſes to keep all his ſins, but if a ſtorm ariſes in his conſcience, why then he will heave one luſt overboard to ſave the life of another.

4. A man may let all ſin go, and yet be a ſinner ſtill; for there is the root of all ſin in the heart though the fruit be not ſeen in the life; the tree lives, though the boughs be lopt off.

As a man is a ſinner before ever he acts ſin, ſo (till grace renew him) he is a ſinner though he leaves ſin, for there is original ſin in him enough to damn and deſtroy him. Pſa.51.5.

5. Sin may be left and yet be loved, a man may forſake the life of ſin and yet retain the love of ſin ; now though leaving ſin makes him almoſt a Chriſtian, yet loving ſin ſhews he is but almoſt a Chriſtian.

It is a leſs evil to do ſin and not love it, then to love ſin and not do it ; for to do ſin may argue onely weakneſs of Grace, but to love ſin argues ſtrength of luſt ; *What I hate that do I*, Rom. 7. 15.

Sin is bad in any part of man, but ſin in the affection is worſe then ſin in the converſation ; for ſin in the converſation may be onely from infirmity, but ſin in the affection is the fruit of choyce and unregeneracy.

6. All ſin may be chained and yet the heart not changed, and ſo the nature of the ſinner is the ſame as ever. A dog chained up is a dog ſtill, as much as if he was let looſe to devour.

There may be a ceſſation of arms between enemies, and yet the quarrel may remain on foot ſtill ; there may be a making Truce where there is no making Peace.

A Sinner may lay the weapons of ſin out of his hand, and yet the enmity againſt God ſtill remain in his heart.

There may be a truce, he may not ſin againſt him; but there can be no peace till he be united unto him.

Reſtraining Grace holds in the Sinner; but it is Renewing Grace that changes the Nature; Now many are held in by Grace from being open Sinners, that are not renewed by Grace, and made true Beleevers.

Now then if a man may forſake open ſins, and retain ſecret ſins; if he may forſake ſin, but not as ſin; if he may let one ſin go to hold another the faſter; if a man may let all ſin go and yet be a ſinner ſtill; if ſin may be left and yet be loved; Finally, if all ſin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed, then a man may forſake ſin, and yet be *but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

5. Fifthly, *A man may hate ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, Abſalom*

hated ***Amnons*** uncleanneſs, with his Siſter *Thamar*, yea, his hatred was ſo great, as that he ſlew him for it, and yet *Abſalom* was but a wicked man. 2 Sam. 13 22, 28.

Object But the Scripture makes it a ſign of a gracious heart to hate ſin, yea though a man do, through infirmity, fall into ſin, yet if he hates it, this is a proof of grace. *Paul* proves the ſincerity of his heart, and the truth of his grace by this hatred of ſin, though he committed it, *Rom.* 7. 15. *what I hate, that do I.*

Nay what is grace but *conformitas cum archetypo*, a conformity of the ſoul to God, to love as God loves, to hate as God hates, now God hates ſin, it is one part of his holineſs, to hate all ſin.

And if I hate ſin, then am I conformed to God, and if I am conformed to God, then am I altogether a Chriſtian.

Sol. It is true, that there is a hatred of ſin which is a ſign of grace, and which flows from a principle of grace, and is grace, as for inſtance.

To hate ſin, as it is an offence to God, a wrong to his Majeſty; to hate ſin, as it is a breach of the command, and ſo a wicked controuling Gods will, which is the onely rule of goodneſs, to hate ſin, as being a diſ-ingenuous tranſgreſſion of that law of love eſtabliſhed in the blood and death of Chriſt, and ſo in a degree *a crucifying of Chriſt afreſh.*

To hate ſin as being a greiving and quenching the Spirit of God, as all ſin in its nature is.

Thus to hate ſin is grace, and thus every true Chriſtian hates ſin.

But though every man that hath grace, hates ſin, yet every man that hates ſin hath not grace. For,

A man may hate ſin from other principles, not as it is a wrong to God, or a wounding Chriſt, or a greiving the Spirit, for then he would hate all ſin, for there is no ſin but hath this in the nature of it. But,

1. A man may hate ſin for the ſhame that attends it, more then for the evil that is in it.

Some ſinners there are who *declare their*

their ſin as Sodom, *and hide it not.* Iſa.3.9. they are ſet down in the *ſeat of the* Pſal. 1. 1. *ſcornful, they glory in their ſhame,* Phil. 3. 19.

But now others there are who are aſhamed of ſin, and therefore hate it, not for the ſins ſake, but the ſhames ſake. This made *Abſalom* hate *Amnons* uncleanneſs, becauſe it brought ſhame upon him and his Siſter.

2. A man may hate ſin more in others then in himſelf, ſo doth the Drunkard, he hates drunkenneſs in another, and yet practiſes it himſelf; The Lyar hates falſe-hood in another, but likes it in himſelf.

Now he that hates ſin from a principle of grace, hates ſin moſt in himſelf, he hates ſin in others, but he loaths moſt the ſins of his own heart.

3. A man may hate one ſin, as being contrary to another; There is a great contrariety between ſin and ſin, between luſt and luſt: It is rhe excellency of the life of grace, that it is a uniforme life, there is no one grace contrary to another, the graces of

Gods Spirit are different, but not differing; faith, and love, and holineſs are all one, they conſiſt together at the ſame time, in the ſame ſubject, nay they can't be parted, there can be no faith without love, no love without holineſs, and ſo on the other hand, no holineſs without love, no love without faith.

So that this makes the life of grace an eaſie and excellent life, but now the life of ſin is a diſtracting contradictious life, wherein a man is a ſervant to contrary luſts, the luſt of pride and prodigality is contrary to the luſt of covetouſneſs, &c. Tit.3.3.

Now when one luſt gets to be the Maſter luſt in the ſoul, then that works a hatred of its contrary, where covetouſneſs gets the heart, there the heart hates pride, and where pride gets uppermoſt in the heart, there the heart hates covetouſneſs.

Thus a man may hate ſin not from a principle of grace, but from the contrariety of luſt.

He don't hate any ſin as it is ſin, but he hates it as being contrary to his beloved ſin.

Now then if a man may hate ſin for the ſhame that attends it, if he may hate ſin more in others then in himſelf, and if he may hate one ſin as being contrary to another, then he may hate ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

6 Sixtly, *A man may make great vows and promiſes, he may have ſtrong purpoſes, and reſolutions againſt ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Thus did *Saul*, he promiſes and reſolves againſt his ſin, *Return my Son David*, ſaith he, *for I will no more do thee harm.* What promiſes and reſolves did *Pharoah* make againſt that ſin of detaining Gods people? Saith he, *I will let the people go, that they may do* Sacrifice *to the Lord*; and again, *I will let ye go, and ye ſhall ſtay no longer*, Exod. 9. 28.

1 Sam 26 21.

Exod. 8. 8

And yet *Saul* and *Pharaoh* both periſhed in their ſins, the greateſt purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin will not make a man a Chriſtian. For,

1. Purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin; we ſay, threatned folk live long, and truely ſo do

threatned ſins. It is not new purpoſes but a new nature that muſt help us againſt ſin; purpoſes may bring to the birth; but without a new nature, *there is no ſtrength to bring forth.*

The new nature is the beſt ſoyl for holy purpoſes to grow in, otherwiſe they wither and dye, like plants in an improper ſoyl.

2. Trouble and afflictions may provoke us to large purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin for the future; what more common then to vow and not to pay; to make vows in the day of trouble. which we make no conſcience to pay, in the day of peace?

Many Covenant againſt ſin, when trouble is upon them; and then ſin againſt their Covenant when it is removed from them.

It was a brave rule that *Pliny* in one of his Epiſtles gave his friend to live by.

Ut tales eſſe perſeveremus ſani, quales nos futuros eſſe profitemur infirmi.

— That we ſhould continue to be ſuch when we are well, as we promiſe to be when we are ſick.

Many are our ſick-bed promiſes, but we are no ſooner well, but we grow ſick of our promiſes.

3. Purpoſes and reſolves againſt ſin for the future may be onely a temptation to put off repentance for the preſent; Satan may put a man on to good purpoſes, to keep him from preſent attempts.

He knows whatever we purpoſe, yet the ſtrength of performance is not in our ſelves.

He knows that purpoſes for the future, are a putting God off for the preſent, they are a ſecret *will-not* to a preſent opportunity. That is a notable paſſage, *Luk.*9.59. *follow me*, ſaith Chriſt to the two men; Now ſee what anſwers they give to Chriſt, *Suffer me firſt to go bury my Father*, *ſays one*; this man purpoſes to follow Chriſt, onely he would ſtay to bury his father: Says the other, *Lord, I will follow thee but let me firſt go and bid them farwel which are at my houſe*, verſ.61. I will follow thee, but onely I would firſt go and take my leave of my friends, or ſet my houſe in order.

And yet we do not finde that ever they followed Chriſt, notwithſtanding their fair purpoſes.

4. Nature unſanctified may be ſo far wrought on as to make great promiſes and and purpoſes againſt ſin.

1. A natural man may have great convictions of ſin, from the workings of an enlightned conſcience.

2. He may approve of the Law of God.

3. He may have a deſire to be ſaved.

Now theſe three together, The workings of conſcience, The ſight of the goodneſs of the law, A deſire to be ſaved, may bring forth in a man great purpoſes againſt ſin, and yet he may have no heart to perform his own purpoſes. This was much-what the caſe of them, *Deut.* 5. ſay they to *Moſes*, verſ. 27. *Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, and tell thou it to us, and we will hear it and do it.*

This is a fair prmiſe, and ſo God takes it, *verſ.* 28. *I have heard the words of this people, they have well ſaid all*

all that they have ſpoken. So ſaid, and ſo done, had been well, but it was better ſaid then done; for though they had a tongue to promiſe, yet they had no heart to performe; and this God ſaw, therefore ſaid he *v.* 29. *O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep my commandements always, that it might be well with them.*

They promiſe to fear God and keep his Commandents, but they wanted a new heart to performe what an unſanctified heart had promiſed.

It fares with men in this caſe, as it did with that ſon in the Goſpel, That ſaid *he would go into the Vine-yard, but went not.* Mat. 21. 30.

Now then, if purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin, if preſent afflictions may draw out large promiſes, if they may be the fruit of a temptation, or if from nature unſanctified, ſurely then a man may promiſe and purpoſe much againſt ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

7: Seventhly, *A man may maintain a ſtrife and combate againſt ſin in him-*

ſelf and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. So did *Balaam*, when he went to curſe the people of God, he had a great ſtrife within himſelf, *How ſhall I curſe* (ſaith he) *where God hath not curſed? Or how ſhall I defie; whom the Lord hath not defied?* Numb. 23. 8.

And did not *Pilate* ſtrive againſt his ſin, when he ſaid to the Jews, *ſhall I crucifie your King? what evil hath he done? I am innocent of the blood of this juſt man.* Mark. 15. 12, 14. Mat. 27. 24.

Object. But you will ſay is not this an argument of grace, when their is a ſtriving in the ſoul againſt ſin? for what ſhould oppoſe ſin in the heart but grace? The Apoſtle makes *the luſting of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit, and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh*, to be an argument of grace in the heart. Gal. 5. 17. Now I find this ſtrife in my heart; though the remainders of corruption ſometimes break out into actual ſins, yet I find a ſtriving in my ſoul againſt ſin.

Sol. It is true, there is a ſtriving againſt ſin, which is onely from grace, and is proper to beleivers, and there is a ſtriving againſt ſin which is not from grace, and therefore may be in them that are not beleivers.

There is a ſtrife againſt ſin in one and the ſame faculty, the will againſt the will, the affection againſt the affection, and this is that which the Apoſtle calls *the luſting of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit*, that is, the ſtriving of the unregenerate part againſt the regenerate, and this is ever in the ſame faculty, and is proper to beleivers onely.

An unbeleiver never finds this ſtrife in himſelf, this ſtrife cannot be in him, it is impoſſible (as ſuch) that is, while he is on this ſide a ſtate of grace.

But then there is a ſtriving againſt ſin in divers faculties, and this is the ſtrife that is in them that are not beleivers, there the ſtrife is between the will and the conſcience; conſcience enlightned and terrified with the fear of Hell and damnation, that is againſt ſin; the will and affection (not being renewed) they are for ſin.

Video meliora proboq; deteriora ſequor.

And this cauſes great tuggings and ſtrong combates many times in the ſinners heart, Thus it was with the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, conſcience convinced them of the Divinity of Chriſt, and of the truth of his being the Son of God, and yet a perverſe will and carnal affections cry out, *crucifie him*, *crucifie him*.

Conſcience pleaded for him, he had a Witneſs in their boſomes, and yet there wills were bent againſt him, and therefore they are ſaid *to have reſiſted the ſpirit*, *viz.* the workings and convictions of the ſpirit in their conſciences, *Acts* 7. 51.

And this is the caſe of many ſinners; when will and affections are for ſin, and plead for it, conſcience is againſt it, and many times frights the ſoul from the doing of it.

And hence men take that which oppoſes ſin in them to be grace, when it is onely the work of a Natural conſcience; they conclude the ſtrife is between grace and ſin, the regenerate and unregenerate part, when alas it is no other then the contention of a natural conſcience againſt a corrupt will and affections.

And if ſo, then a man may have great

ſtrifes and combates, againſt ſin in him, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

5th

5. *A man may deſire grace, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; ſo did *the five fooliſh Virgins*, Mat. 25. 8. *Give us of your Oyl*, what was that but true grace? it was that Oyl that lighted the wiſe Virgins into the Bridegrooms Chamber.

They do not onely deſire to enter in, but they deſire Oyl to light them in, wicked men may deſire Heaven, deſire a Chriſt to ſave them; there is none ſo wicked upon earth but deſire to be happy in Heaven.

But now here are them that deſire grace as well as glory, and yet theſe are but almoſt Chriſtians.

Object.

But is it not commonly taught, *that deſires of grace are grace?* Nay, doth not our Lord Chriſt himſelf make it ſo? *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.*

Mat. 5. 6.

Sol.

It is true, that there are ſome deſires of grace which are grace. As,

1. When a man deſires grace from a right ſenſe of his natural ſtate, when

he ſees the vileneſs of ſin, and the woful defiled and loathſome condition he is in by reaſon of ſin, and therefore deſires the grace of Chriſt to renew and change him, this is grace. This ſome make to be the loweſt degree of ſaving faith.

2. When a man joyns proportionable endeavours to his deſires, doth not onely wiſh for grace, but work for grace, ſuch deſires are grace.

3. When a mans deſires are conſtant and unceſſant, that ceaſe not but in the attainment of their Object, ſuch deſires are true grace.

They are a part of the eſpecial work of the Spirit.

They do really partake of the nature of grace; now it is a known makim, *Quicquid participat de natura totius eſt pars totius*, That which partakes of the nature of the whole is a part of the whole, the filings of gold, are gold. The Sea is not more really water, then the leaſt drop; the flame is not more really fire, then the leaſt ſpark, for theſe do *participare de natura totius.*

But though all true deſires of grace, are grace, yet all deſires of grace are not true. For.

1. A man may deſire grace but not for it ſelf, but for ſomewhat elſe; not grace for grace's ſake, but for heavens ſake; He don't deſire grace that his nature may be changed, his heart renewed, the Image of God ſtampt upon him, and his luſts ſubdued in him.

Theſe are bleſſed deſires found onely in true beleivers.

The true Chriſtian onely can deſire grace for graces ſake, but the almoſt Chriſtian may deſire grace for Heavens ſake.

2. A man may deſire grace without proportionable indeavours after grace; many are good at wiſhing, bad at working, like him that lay in the graſs on a Summers day, crying out, *O ſi hoc eſſet laborare!* Oh that this were to work.

Salomon ſaith, *the deſires of the ſlothful kills him*; How ſo? *For his hands refuſe to labour*, *Prov.* 21. 25. He periſheth in his deſires.

Virtutem exoptant contabeſcantq; relicta. Perſ.

The

Impii non curant quærere quem tamen deſiderant invenire, cupientes conſequi ſed non & ſequi. Bern.

The beleiver joyns deſires and indeavours together, *one thing have I deſired of the Lord, and that I will ſeek after*, Pſal. 27.4.

3. A mans deſires of grace may be unſeaſonable; thus the *fooliſh Virgins* deſired Oyl when it was too late.

The beleivers deſires are ſeaſonable, he deſires grace in the ſeaſon of grace, and ſeeks in a time when it may be found. *The wiſe mans heart knows both time and Judgement.* He knows his ſeaſon, and hath wiſdom to improve it.

Eccleſ. 8. 5.

Sero ſapiunt Phryges

The ſilly ſinner doth all his works out of ſeaſon, he ſins away the ſeaſons of grace, and then deſires grace when the ſeaſon is over; the ſinner doth all too late, as *Eſau* deſired the bleſſing when it was too late, and therefore he loſt it, whereas had he come ſooner he had obtained it.

Moſt men are like *Epimetheus*, wiſe too late; they come when the Market is done, when God hath ſhut inſhop then they have their Oyl to get.

When they lye upon their death beds, then they deſire holy hearts.

4. Deſires of grace in many are very inconſtant, and fleeting like the *morning dew that quickly paſſes away.* Or like *Jonah's Gourd*, that ſprings up in a night and withers in a night, they have no root in the heart, and therefore quickly periſh; now then if a man may deſire grace but not for graces ſake, if deſires may be without indeavours; if a man may deſire grace when tis too late, if theſe deſires may be but fleeting and inconſtant, then may a man deſire grace, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Hoſ. 6. 4.
Jonah 4. 6. 7.

6. *A man may tremble at the word of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, as *Belſhazzer* did at the handwriting upon the wall. Dan. 5. 6.

6 bp

Object. But is not that a note of ſincerity and truth of grace to tremble at the word? doth not God ſay, *to him will I look, that is of a poor and contrite ſpirit, and trembles at my word*; Iſa. 66. 2.

Sol. There is a two fold trembling.

Firſt, One is when the word diſcovers the guilt of ſin and the Wrath of God that belongs to that guilt, this, where conſcience is awake cauſes trembling and amazement; thus when *Paul Preached of righteouſneſs and judgment*, it is ſaid *Felix* trembled. Act, 24 25

Secondly, There is a trembling which ariſes from a holy dread, and reverence of the Majeſty of God, ſpeaking in his word; this is onely found in true beleivers, and is that which keeps the ſoul low in its own eyes. Therefore mark how the words run in *Iſa. 66. 2. To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite ſpirit, and trembles at my Word.*

God don't make the promiſe to him that trembles at the word, for *the Devils beleive and tremble*, the word of God can make the proudeſt ſtouteſt ſinner in the World to ſhake and tremble, but it is *to the poor and contrite ſpirit that trembles*; where trembling is the fruit of a ſpirit broken for ſin, and low in its own eys there will God look. James 2. 19.

Now many tremble at the Word, but not from poverty of ſpirit, not from a heart broken for ſin, and low in its own eys, not from a ſenſe of the Majeſty and holineſs of God; and therefore notwithſtanding they tremble at the word, yet are they but almoſt Chriſtians.

76k

7. *A man may delight in the Word, and Ordinances of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, Iſa. 58. 2. *They take delight in approaching to God.* Iſa. 58. 2.

And it is ſaid of that ground *Mat.* 13. 20. that it *received the word with joy*, and yet it was but ſtony ground.

Object. But is it not made a character of a godly man to delight in the Word of God? doth not David ſay, he is a *bleſſed man that delights in the Law of the Lord*? Pſal. 1. 2.

Sol. There is a delighting in the word, which flows from grace, and is a proof of bleſſedneſs.

1. He that delights in the Word, becauſe of its ſpirituality, he is a Chriſtian indeed; the more ſpiritual the Ordinances are, the more doth a gratious heart delight in them.

2. When the word comes cloſe to the conſcience, rips up the heart, and diſcovers ſin, and yet the ſoul delights in it notwithſtanding, this is a ſign of grace.

3. When delight ariſes from that communion that is to be had with God there, this is from a principle of grace in the ſoul.

But there may be a delight in the word, where there is no grace.

1. There are many delight in the word, becauſe of the eloquence of the Preacher; they delight not ſo much in the truths delivered, as in the dreſs that they are delivered in.

Ezek 33. 32. Thus it is ſaid of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he was to them *as a very lovely ſong of one that hath a pleaſant voice.*

2. There are very many delight to hear the word, that yet take no delight to do it, ſo ſaith God of them Ezek.33.2 in *Ezek.33.2. they delight to hear my words, but they do them not.*

Now then, if a man may delight in the word more becauſe of the eloquence of the Preacher, then becauſe of the ſpiritualneſs of the matter; if he may delight to hear the Word, and yet not delight to do it, then he may delight in the Word, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

8th

8. *A man may be a member of the Church of Chriſt, he may joyn himſelf to the people of God, partake with them in all Ordinances, and ſhare of all Church Priviledges, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

So the *five fooliſh Virgins* joyned themſelves to the wiſe, and walked together.

Many may be members of the Church of Chriſt, and yet not members of Chriſt the head of the Church.

There was a mixed multitude came up with the Church of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, they joyned themſelves to the *Iſraelites*, owned their God, left their own Country, and yet in heart *Egyptians* notwithſtanding.

All are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael, Rom. 9.6.

The Church in all Ages hath had

unſound members; *Cain* had communion with *Abel*, *Iſhmael* dwelt in the ſame houſe with *Iſaack*; *Judas* was in fellowſhip with the Apoſtles, and ſo was *Demas* with the reſt of the Diſciples.

There will be ſome Bran in the fineſt Meal; the Draw-Net of the Goſpel, catches bad fiſh as well as good; the Tares and the Wheat grow together, and it will be ſo till the Harveſt.

God hath a Church where there are no members but ſuch as are true members of Chriſt, but it is in Heaven, it is *the Church of the firſt born*, there are no Hypocrites, no rotten, unſound profeſſors, none but *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, all is pure Wheat that God layeth up in that Garner, there the Chaff is ſeparated to unquenchable fire.

Heb. 12. 23.

Mat. 3. 12

But in the Church on Earth, the Wheat and the Chaff lie in the ſame heap together, the *Samaritans* will be ne'r of Kin to the *Jews*, when they are in proſperity; ſo while the Church of God flouriſheth in the World, many will joyn to it, they will ſeem *Jews*, though they are *Samaritans*, and ſeem Saints, though yet they are no better then almoſt Chriſtians.

9th

9. *A man may have great hopes of Heaven, great hopes of being Saved, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Indeed there is a hope of Heaven, which is *the Anchor of the ſoul, ſure and ſtedfaſt*, it never miſcarries, and it is known by four properties. Heb. 6. 19.

1

Firſt, It is a hope which purifies the heart, purges out ſin, 1 *John* 3. 3. *He that hath this hope purifies himſelf, even as God is pure.*

That ſoul that truely hopes to enjoy God, truely indeavours to be like God.

2

Secondly, It is a hope which fils the heart with gladneſs, *we rejoyce in hope of the glory of God.* Rom. 5. 2.

3

Thirdly, It is a hope that is founded upon the promiſe, as there can be no true faith without a promiſe, ſo nor any true hope; faith applies the promiſe, and hope expects the fulfilling the promiſe; faith relies upon the truth of it, and hope waits for the Pſa. 130. 5

the good of it; faith gives intereſt, hope expects livery and ſeiſin.

4 *Fourthly*, It is a hope that is wrought by God himſelf in the ſoul, who is therefore called *the God of hope*, as being the Author as well as the Object of hope. Rom. 15. 13.

Now he that hath this hope ſhall never miſcarry, this is a right hope, the hope of the true beleiver; *Chriſt in you the hope of glory*. Col. 1. 27.

But then, as there is a true and ſound hope, ſo there is a falſe and rotten hope, and this is much more common, as baſtard pearls are more frequently worn then true pearls.

There is nothing more common then to ſee men big with groundleſs hopes of Heaven, As,

1. A man may have great hope, that hath no grace, you read of the hope of Hypocrites, *Job* 8. 13, 14.

The performance of duties is a proof of their hope; the fooliſh Virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they ſhould have been ſhut out after all.

Many profeſſors would not be at

ſuch pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for Heaven.

Hope is the great motive to action, deſpair cuts the ſinews of all indeavours; that is one reaſon why the damned in hell ceaſe acting toward an alteration of their ſtate, becauſe deſpair hath taken hold of them; if there were any hope in Hell, they would up and be doing there.

So that there may be great hope where there is no grace, experience proves this; formal profeſſors are men of no grace, but yet men of great hopes; nay many times you ſhall find that none fear more about their eternal condition, then they that have moſt cauſe of hope, and none hope more then they that have moſt cauſe of fear.

As intereſt in God may ſometimes be without hope, ſo hope in God may be without intereſt.

2. A man may hope in the mercy and goodneſs, and power of God, without eying the promiſe, and this is the hope of moſt; God is full of mercy and goodneſs, and therefore willing

to ſave; and he is infinite in power, and therefore able to ſave; why therefore ſhould I not reſt on him?

Now it is preſumption and therefore ſin to hope in the mercy of God, otherwiſe then by eying the promiſe; for the promiſe is the Channel of mercy, the Pipe through which it is conveyed; all the bleſſedneſs the Saints injoy in Heaven, is no other then what is the fruit of the promiſe relyed on, and hoped for here on Earth.

A man hath no warrant to hope in God, but by vertue of the promiſe.

3. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet not cleanſe his heart, not depart from his ſecret ſins; that hope of Salvation that is not accompanied with heart-purification, that is a vain hope.

4. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet be doing the work of Hell; he may hope for ſalvation, and yet be working out his own damnation, and ſo periſh in his confidences.

This is the caſe of many, *male agendo ſperant, & ſperando pereunt,* like the Water-man, that looks one way, and rows another; many have their eyes on Heaven, whoſe hearts are in the Earth; they hope in God, but chuſe him not for a portion; they hope in God, but do not love him as the beſt good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him, but are like to periſh without him, notwithſtanding all their hopes. *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God takes away his ſoul?*

Now then if a man may have great hope of Heaven that hath no grace, if he may hope in mercy without eying the promiſe, if he may hope without heart purifying, if he may hope for Heaven, and yet do the work of Hell, ſurely then a man may have great hopes of Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

10. *A man may be under great and viſible changes, and theſe wrought by the Miniſtry of the Word, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Herod* was, it is ſaid, 10th

Mar. 6. 20. when *he heard John Baptiſt, he did many things, and heard him gladly.* *Saul* was under a great change, when he met the Lords Prophets, he turned Prophet too. 1 Sam. 10. 10.

Nay it is ſaid *v.* 9. of that 1. *Sam.* 10. *that God gave him another heart.*

Now was not this a work of grace? and was not *Saul* here truely converted? one would think he was; but yet indeed he was not?

For though it is ſaid, God gave him *another heart*, yet it is not ſaid that God gave him a *new heart.*

There is a great difference between לב אחר (*lebb acher*) another heart, and לב חדש (*lebb chadaſh*) a new heart: God gave him another heart to fit him for a Ruler, but gave him not a *new heart* to make him a beleiver; another heart may make another man, but it is a *new heart*, that makes a *new man.*

Again *Simon Magus* is a great proof of this truth, he was under a great and viſible change, of a *ſorcerer* he was turned to be a *beleiver*, he left his Witch-crafts and Sorceries, and imbraced the Goſpel, was not this a great change?

If the Drunkard doth but leave his Drunkenneſs, the Sewarer his Oaths, the Prophane perſon his Prophaneſs, they think this is a gracious change, and their State is now good; alaſs *Simon Magus* did not onely leave his ſins, but had a kind of a converſion, for *he beleived and was Baptized.* Act. 8. 13.

Object. But is not that man that is changed a true Chriſtian?

Sol. Not every change makes a man a Chriſtian, indeed there is a change that whoever is under it, he is a true Chriſtian.

When a mans heart is ſo changed as that it is renewed, when *old things are done away, and all is become new* 2 Cor. 5. 17. when the καινὴ κτίσις, the new creature is wrought in the ſoul, when a man is turned *from darkneſs to light, from the power of Satan to God,* Act. 26. 18. when the mind is inlightened, the will renewed, the affections made Heavenly, then a man is a Chriſtian indeed.

But now you muſt know that every change is not this change. For,

1. There is a civil change, a moral change, as well as a ſpiritual and ſupernatural change.

Many men are changed in a moral ſenſe, and one may ſay, they are become *new men*, but they are in heart and nature the ſame men ſtill; They are not changed in a ſpiritual, and ſupernatural ſenſe, and therefore it cannot be ſaid of them, they are become *new creatures.*

Reſtraining grace may cauſe a moral change, but it is renewing grace that muſt cauſe a ſaving change.

Now many are under reſtraining grace, and ſo changed morally, that are not under the power of renewing grace, and ſo changed ſavingly.

2. There is an outward change, as well as an inward change; the outward change is often without the inward, though the inward change is never without the outward.

A mans heart cannot be ſanctified, but it will influence the life; but a mans life may be reformed, and yet never affect or influence the heart.

3. A man may be converted from a courſe of prophaneſs, to a form of godlineſs, from a filthy converſation, to a fair profeſſion, and yet the heart the ſame, in one and the other.

A rotten poſt may be guilt without, and yet unſound within. *Hypocrita in verbis ſanctus, in corde vanus; intus Nero, foris Calo. Audi, nemo melius; ſpecta, nemo pejus.*

It is common to have the outſide of the Cup and Platter made clean, and yet the inſide foul and filthy. Mat. 23. 25.

Now then if a man may be changed morally, and yet not ſpiritually, outwardly, and yet not inwardly, from a courſe of prophaneſs, to a lifeleſs forme of godlineſs, then a man may be under great and viſible changes, and yet be no more then almoſt a Chriſtian.

I do not ſpeak this to diſcountenance any change, ſhort of that that is ſpiritual, but to awaken you to ſeek after that change, which is more then moral.

It is good to be outwardly reformed, but it is better to be ſavingly renewed.

I know how natural it is for men to take up with any thing like a work of converſion, though it be not converſion, and reſting in that, they periſh eternally.

Beloved, let me tell you, there is no change, no converſion can ſtead your ſouls in the day of judgement, on this ſide that ſaving work, which is wrought on the Soul by the Spirit of God, renewing you throughout; the ſober man without this change, ſhall as ſurely go to Hell as the beaſtly drunkard. 1 Theſ. 5. 23.

Morality and civility may commend us to men, but not to God. They are of no value in the procurement of an eternal Salvation.

A man may go far in an outward change, and yet not be one ſtep nearer Heaven, then he that never was under any change, nay he may be (in ſome ſenſe) farther off, as Chriſt ſaith, *the Scribes and Phariſees were farther from Heaven*, with all their ſhew of godlineſs, *then Publicans and Harlots*, Mat. 21. 31.

in all their ſin and uncleanneſs.

Becauſe reſting in a falſe work, a partial change; we neglect to ſeek after a true and ſaving change.

There is nothing more common then to miſtake our ſtate, and by overweaning thoughts misjudge our condition, and ſo periſh in our own deluſions.

The World is full of theſe fooliſh Builders, that lay the foundation of their hopes of eternal ſalvation, upon the ſand. Mat.7.26

Now my brethren, would you not miſtake the way to Heaven, and periſh in a deluſion, would you not be found fools at laſt, for none are ſuch fools as the ſpiritual fool, who is a fool in the great buſineſs of ſalvation?

Would you not be fools for your ſouls and for eternity? Oh then labour after, and pray for a through work of converſion, beg of God that he would make a ſaving change in your ſouls, that you may be altogether Chriſtians, all other changes below this ſaving change, this heart-change, make us but almoſt Chriſtians.

11th 11. *A man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian:* *Jehu* did not onely ſerve God and do what he commanded him, but was very zealous in his ſervice: 2 *Kings* 10. 16. *come with me, and ſee my zeal for the Lord of Hoſts*, and yet in all this *Jehu* was a very Hypocrite, *Joaſh* was a great reformer in *Jehojadahs* time, it is ſaid *he did that which was right in the eys of the Lord, all the days of Jehojada the Preiſt*, but when *Jehojadah* dyed, *Joaſh* his zeal for God dyed with him, and he becomes a very wretch. 2 Chron. 29. 2. v. 17, 18.

Object. But the Apoſtle makes zeal to be a note of ſound Chriſtianity. *Gal.* 4. 18. *It is good to be zealouſly affected in a good thing*, nay it ſeems to be the non-ſuch qualification for obtaining eternal life, *the Kingdom of Heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* Mat. 11. 12.

Sol. It is true there is a zeal, which is good, and which renders the ſoul highly acceptable to God, a zeal that never miſſes of Heaven and Salvation.

Now this is a zeal which is a celeſtial fire, the true temper and heat of all the affections to God and Chriſt, *qui non zelat non amat.*

It is a zeal wrought and kindled in the ſoul by the ſpirit of God, who firſt works it, and then ſets it on work. 1

It is a zeal that hath the Word of God for its guide, directing it in working both in regard of its object and end, manner and meaſure. 2

It is a zeal that checks ſin, and forwards the Heavenly life. 3

It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its cheif end, which ſwallows up all by-ends, *The zeal of thine houſe, hath eaten me up.* 4 Joh. 2. 17.

But now all zeal is not this kind of zeal, there is a falſe zeal, as well as a true, every grace hath its counterfeit, as there is fire, which is true Heavenly fire on the Altar, ſo there is *ſtrange fire, Nadab and Abihu offered ſtrange fire upon Gods Altar.* Lev. 10. 1

There are ſeveral kinds of zeal, none of which are true and ſound, but falſe and counterfeit.

Ile inſtance in eight particulars.

Firſt, *There is a blind zeal*, a zeal without knowledge, *Rom.* 10. 2. *They have a zeal* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *but not according to knowledge*, now as knowledge without zeal is fruitleſs, ſo zeal without knowledge is dangerous, it is like Wild-fire in the hand of a fool, or like the Devil in the man poſſeſſed, that threw him ſometimes into the fire, ſometimes into the water, *zelus abſq; ſcientia, quo vehementius irruit, eo gravius corruit.* Mat. 17. 15. Bernard.

The eye is the light of the body, and the underſtanding is the light of the ſoul, now as the body without the light of the eye, cannot go without ſtumbling, ſo the ſoul without the light of the mind, cannot act without erring.

Zeal without knowledge, is like an *ignis fatuus* in a dark night, that leads a Traveller out of his way, into the Bogs and Mire. This was the zeal of *Paul*, while he was a *Phariſe*, *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day, and I perſecuted this way unto the death.* Acts 22. 3, 4.

And ſo *Acts* 26.9 *I verily thought with my ſelf, I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of* Nazareth; So *Philip.*3.6. *concerning zeal, perſecuting the Church.*

Such a zeal was that in *John* 16. 2. *They ſhall put you out of the Synagogue,* (ſilence you, you ſhall not be ſuffered to Preach,) *yea the time comes that whoever kills you, will think that he doth God ſervice.* This is great zeal, but yet it is a blind zeal, and that God abhors.

Secondly, *There is a partial zeal,* in one thing fire hot, in another key cold, zealous in this thing, and yet careleſs in another, many are firſt-Table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the firſt Table, and yet neglect the ſecond; thus the *Phariſes* were zealous in there *corban*, and yet unnatural to their Parents, ſuffering them to ſtarve and periſh.

Mat. 23. 23. *Lyra* hath theſe very words *filius per profeſſionem factam in religione excuſatur a ſubveniendo parentibus.*

Others are ſecond Table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the ſecond Table, but neglect the firſt, more for Righteouſneſs among men, then for holineſs towards God.

But now he whoſe religion ends with the firſt Table, or begins with the ſecond, he is a fool in his profeſſion, for he is but almoſt a Chriſtian.

The woman that was for the dividing the child was not the true Mother, and he that is for dividing the Commands, is not a true beleiver.

2 Kings 10. 16. comp. with 29. v.

Jehu was zealous againſt *Ahabs* houſe, but not ſo againſt *Jeroboams calves*, many are zealous againſt ſins of opinion, that yet uſe no zeal againſt the ſins of their converſation.

Io. Fernel. de febribus l. 4. c. 19

Now as we know that the ſweat of the whole body is a ſign of health, but the ſweat of ſome one part onely, ſhews a diſtemper, and therefore Phyſitians do reckon ſuch a heat to be *ſymptomatical*:

So where zeal reaches to every command of God alike, that is a ſign of a ſound conſtitution of ſoul; but where it is partial, where a man is hot in one part, and cold in another, that is Symptomatical of ſome inward Spiritual diſtemper.

Thirdly, *There is a miſplaced zeal,*

fixed upon unſuitable and diſproportionable Objects. Many are very zealous in trifling things that are not worth it, and trifle in the things that moſt require it, like the *Phariſees* that were diligent Tithers of *mint anniſe, & cumin*, but neglected the τὰ βαρύτερα τοῦ νόμου, the *weightier matters of the Law, judgement, mercy, and faith.* They had no zeal for theſe, though very hot for the other; many are more zealous for a ceremony, then for the ſubſtance of Religion; more zealous for bowing at the name of Jeſus, then for conformity to the life of Jeſus; more zealous for a holy veſtment, then for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of men, then for the inſtitutions of Chriſt.

Mat. 23. 23.

This is a ſuperſtitious zeal, and uſually found in men unconverted, whom grace never was wrought in. When was it that *Paul* was ſo *exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his Fathers*, as he ſaith, *Gal.* 1. 14. but only when he was in his wretched and unconverted ſtate; as you may ſee in the next verſes, *But when it plea-*

Heathens will riſe up in judgment againſt ſuch men *Deus non ſuperſtitione coli vult ſed pietate*, ſaith *Cicero*.

Gal. 1 15, 16. *ſed God to call me by his grace, then I conferred not with fleſh and blood. Paul* had another kind of zeal then, acted by other kind of Principles.

Fourthly, *There is a ſelfiſh zeal*, that hath a mans own ends for its motive; *Jehu* was very zealous, but it was not ſo much for God as for the Kingdom, not ſo much in obedience to the command, as in deſign to ſtep into the Throne, and therefore God threatens to puniſh him for that very thing he commands him to do, *Hoſ.* 1.4. *I will avenge the blood of* Jezreel *upon the houſe of* Jehu. Becauſe he ſhed that blood to gratifie his luſt, not to obey God. So *Simeon* and *Levi* pretend great zeal for Circumciſion, ſeem very zealous for the honour of Gods Ordinance, when in truth their zeal was for covetouſneſs and revenge upon the *Shechemites*. Gen. 34. 14, 15. comp. with v. 25 26, 27, 28, 29.

—It is ſtoryed of Dr. *Aylmer* that in his young days, he was very high againſt the pride and covetouſneſs of the Biſhops, and in a book of his, he thus ſpeaks to them; come off you Biſhops, away with your ſuperfluities, yeild up your thouſands, be content with a little.

But afterwards when he himſelf came to be Biſhop of *London*, then his profits and preferment had eat up his zeal, and he would confeſs to his friends, that he had been of another ſtrain in his youth, abuſing thoſe words of *Paul*, *when I was a Child, I ſpake as a Child, I underſtood as a child, I thought as a Child.*

1 Cor, 13. 11.

Fifthly, *There is an outſide zeal*, ſuch was that of the *Scribes and Phariſes*; they would not eat *with unwaſhed hands*, but yet would live in unſeen ſins, they would waſh the cup often, but the heart ſeldom, paint the outſide, but neglect the inſide. *Jehu* was a mighty out-ſide reformer, 2 *Kings* 10. 16. but he reformed nothing within, for he had a baſe heart under all, *v.* 31. *Jehu took no heed, to walk in the Law of the Lord with all his heart.* Though his fleece was fair, his liver was rotten.

Ne appetat quiſquam ultra videri quam eſt, ut poſſit ultra eſſe quam videtur. Greg.

Our Lord Chriſt obſerves of the *Phariſes*, *they pray to be ſeen of men*, and faſt ſo *that they may appear to* men to faſt. *Matth.* 6. 5, 16.

Sixthly, *There is a fortaſick zeal*, that runs out upon others, like the candle in the Lanthorn that ſends all the heat out at top, or as the lewd Woman *Salomon mentions*, whoſe
Pro.7.11. *feet abide not in her own houſe.*

Many are hot and high againſt the ſins of others, and yet cannot ſee the ſame in themſelves, like the *Lamiæ*, that put on their ſpectacles when they went abroad, but pulled them off within doors.

It is eaſie to ſee fault in others, and as hard to ſee then in our ſelves. *Jehu* was zealous againſt *Baal* and his Prieſts, becauſe that was *Ahabs* ſin, but not againſt the Calves of *Bethel*, becauſe that was his own ſin.

Tecum habita. This zeal is the true Character of an Hypocrite, his own Garden is over-run with Weeds, while he is buſie in looking over his Neighbours Pale.

Seaventhly, *There is a ſinful zeal*, all the former may be called ſinful from ſome defect, but this I call ſinful in a more ſpecial notion, becauſe againſt the life and cheif of Religion, it is a zeal againſt zeal, that flies not at profaneſs, but at the very power of godlineſs, not at error, but at truth, and is moſt hot againſt the moſt ſpiritual and important truths of the times.

Whence elſe are the ſufferings of men for the truth, but from this ſpirit of zeal againſt the truth?

This may be called a devilliſh zeal, for as there is the faith of Devils, ſo there is the zeal of Devils, *therefore his rage is great, becauſe he knows his time is ſhort.* Iam. 1. 19 Rev. 12. 12.

Eighthly, *There is a Scriptureleſs zeal*, that is not butted and bounded by the Word, but by ſome baſe and low end, ſuch was *Sauls* zeal, when God bids him deſtroy *Amalek*, and *ſpare neither man nor beaſt*, then contrary to Gods command he ſpares the beſt *of the Sheep and Oxen*, under pretence of zeal for Gods Sacrifice. 1 Sam. 15. 3.

Another time when he had no ſuch command, then he ſlaies the *Gibeonites*, *in his zeal to the Children of* Iſrael *and* Judah. 2 Sam. 21. 2.

Many a mans zeal is greateſt then and there, when and where he hath the leaſt warrant from God.

It is worth the while, to obſerve how zealous men are for Ceremonies and pompouſneſs in the worſhip of God, when as there is not one word in all the Scripture for them.

I will tell you (and the Scripture adjuſts me in it) that it is one of the ſureſt ſigns of an Antichrriſtian ſpirit to be zealous for unwritten and ungrounded traditions in the Worſhip of God.

The true ſpirit of zeal is bounded by Scripture, for it is for God, and the concernments of his glory: God hath no glory from that zeal that hath no Scripture warrant.

Now then if the zeal of a man in the things of God, may be onely a blind zeal, or a partial zeal, or a miſplaced zeal, or a ſelfiſh zeal, or an out-ſide zeal, or a forenſick zeal, or a ſinful zeal, or a Scriptureleſs zeal, then it is evident that a man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

12. *A man may be much in Prayer he may pray often, and pray much, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, ſo did the *Phariſes*, whom yet our Lord Chriſt rejects for Hypocrites. 12th

Mat. 23. 14.

Object.

But is not a praying frame an argument of a ſincere heart? are not the Saints of God called *The generation of them that ſeek the face of God?* Pſal. 24. 6.

Sol.

A man is not therefore a Chriſtian becauſe he is much in prayer. I grant

That thoſe prayers that are from the workings and ſighings of Gods Spirit in us.

From a ſincere heart lifted to God. 1)

From ſenſe of our own emptineſs, and Gods infinite fulneſs. 2)

That are ſuited to Gods will, the great rule of prayer. 3)

That are for ſpiritual things more then temporal. 4)

That are accompanied with faith and dependance: Such prayers ſpeak a man altogether a Chriſtian. 5)

But now a man be much in prayer, and yet be a ſtranger to ſuch prayer. As,

1. Nature may put a man upon prayer, for it is a part of natural worſhip; it may put a child of God upon prayer; ſo it did Chriſt, *Matth.* 26.39,42 *He went and fell on his face and prayed, ſaying, O my Father, if it be poſſible let this cup paß from me.* This was a prayer of Chriſt, which flowed from the ſinleſs ſtruglings of Nature, ſeeking its own preſervation.

2. A man may pray in pretence for a covering to ſome ſin, ſo did thoſe devout Phariſees, *Matth.* 23. 14. *Wo to you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, for ye devour widows houſes, and for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye ſhall receive the greater damnation.*

So the Papiſts ſeem very devout to pray a rich mans ſoul out of Purgatory, but it is to cheat the Heir of much of his eſtate, under pretence of praying for his fathers ſoul.

3. A man may pray and yet love ſin, as *Auſtin*, before converſion, prayed againſt his ſin, but was afraid God ſhould hear him, and take him at his word.

Now God hears not ſuch prayers, Pſal.66.18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear my prayer.*

4. A man may pray much for temporal things, and little for ſpiritual things, and ſuch are the prayers of moſt men, crying out moſt for temporal things; more for *who will ſhew us any good?* then for *Lord lift upon us the light of thy countenance. David* copies out the prayer of ſuch, *Pſal.*144.12,*&c. That our ſons may be as plants, that our daughters may be as corner-ſtones, poliſhed after the ſimilitude of a palace. That our garners may be full*, &c. *Happy is the people that is in ſuch a caſe:* This is the carnal hearts prayer, and this *David* calls vanity, verſ.11. *They are ſtrange children, whoſe mouth ſpeaketh vanity.*

Pſal. 4 6.

Pſa. 144. 12,13,14, 15.

5. A man may pray and yet be far from God in prayer; *This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, Matth.* 15. 8. a man may pray, and yet have no heart in prayer and that God chiefly looks at: *My ſon give me thy heart.*

Iſa. 29.13

Pro. 23. 26.

The Jews have this ſentence written upon the walls of their Synagogues, *Prayer without the intention of the mind, is but a body without a ſoul.*

It is not enough to be conſcionable to uſe prayer, but we muſt be conſcionable to the uſe of prayer.

Many are ſo conſcientious, that they dare not but pray; and yet ſo irreligious, that they have no heart in prayer, a common work of God may make a man conſcionable to do duties, but nothing leſs then ſaving grace in the heart will make a man conſcionable in the doing of them.

6. A mans prayer may be a lye; as a profeſſion without ſanctity is a lie to the world, ſo prayer without ſincerity is a lye to God. It is ſaid of *Iſrael* that *they ſought God, and enquired early after him*; they were much in prayer, and yet God calls all but a lie. *Neverthelеſs they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied to him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him.* v.36,27.

Pſal. 78. 34

Some derive the latin *colo*, to worſhip, from the Greek κολακεύειν, to flatter, & the Engliſh word *flatter*, from the Greek word λατρεύειν to worſhip.

Hearken to my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips, ſaith *David*, *Pſal.* 17.1.

7. Afflictions and the preſſures of outward evils will make a man pray, and pray much, *Pſal.*78.34. *When he ſlew them then they ſought him, and returned and, inquired early after God.* The Heathen Mariners call every man upon his God when in a ſtorm; when they fear drowning, then they fall to praying, *Jon.* 1.5. Mariners are for the moſt part none of the devouteſt, not much addicted to prayer; they will ſwear twice, where they pray once; and yet it is ſaid *they cry to the Lord in their trouble*, Pſal. 107.23,28. And hence you have a proverb, *He that cannot pray let him go to ſea.*

Nuper me amici cujuſdam languor admonuit optimos eſſe nos dum infirmi ſumus, Plin. Ep.26.l.7

Qui neſcit orare diſcat navigare.

They poured out a prayer when thy chaſtening was upon them, Iſa.26.16.

Now then if Nature may put a man upon prayer; if a man may pray in pretence and deſign; if a man may pray and yet love ſin; if a man may pray moſtly for temporal things; if a man may pray and yet be far from God in prayer; if prayer may be a lie; or if it may be only the cry of the ſoul under affliction, ſure then a man may be much in prayer, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Object. But ſuppoſe a man pray, and prevail with God in prayer, ſurely that is a witneſs from heaven of a mans ſincerity in prayer? Now I pray and prevail, I ask and am anſwered.

Sol. A man may pray and be anſwered, for God many times anſwers prayers in judgement; as God is ſometimes ſilent in mercy, ſo he ſpeaks in wrath; and as he ſometimes denies prayer in mercy, ſo he ſometimes anſwers in judgement: When men are over importunate in ſome things their luſts are upon, and will take no nay, then God anſwers in judgement, *Pſal.*78.29. *He gave them their own deſire*; They had deſired quails, and God ſends them, but now mark the judgement, v. 30.31. *VVhile the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and ſlew them.*

Object. I, but ſuppoſe a mans affections are much ſtirred in prayers, how then? Is not that a true note of Chriſtianity?

Now my affections are much ſtirred in prayers

So was *Eſau's* when he ſought the bleſſing, *He ſought it carefully with tears.* A man may be affected with his own parts in a duty; while good notions paſs through his head, and good words through his lips, ſome good motions alſo may ſtir in his heart; but they are but ſparks which fly out at the tunnel of the chimney, which ſuddenly vaniſh. *Sol.* Heb. 12. 17.

So that it is poſſible a man may pray and prevail in prayer, pray and be affected in prayer, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

13. *A man may ſuffer for Chriſt, in his goods, in his name, in his perſon, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* 13.th

Every man that bears Chriſts Croſs on his ſhoulders, doth not therefore bear Chriſts Image in his ſoul.

Object. But doth not our Lord Chriſt, make great promiſes to them that ſuffer or loſe any thing for him? doth not he ſay *Mat.* 19. 29. *every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children* Mat. 19. 29.

children, or lands, for my names ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting life?

Sure they are true Chriſtians whom Chriſt makes this promiſe to.

Sol. There is a ſuffering for Chriſt, that is a note of ſincerity, and ſhall have its reward.

Mat. 5. 10. 11, 12. That is, when a man ſuffers for a good cauſe, upon a good call, and with a good conſcience, for Chriſts ſake, and in Chriſts ſtrength, when Col. 1. 24 his ſufferings are a *filling up that which is behind of the ſufferings of Chriſt,* when a man ſuffers as a Chriſtian, as the Apoſtle hath it, 1 *Pet.* 4. 6. *if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed,* Mat. 14. 28, 29. when a man thruſts not himſelf into ſuffering, but ſtays Gods call, ſuch ſuffering is a proof of integrity.

But now every ſuffering for Chriſt, is not ſuffering as a Chriſtian. For

1. A man may ſuffer for Chriſt, for that profeſſion of Religion that is upon him, the World hates the ſhew of Religion, times may come, that it may coſt a man as dear to wear the

Livery of Chriſt, as to wear Chriſt himſelf. *Alexander* had like to have loſt his life for the Goſpels ſake, *Acts* 19. 33. yet he was that *Alexander* (as is generally judged) that afterward made *Shipwrack of faith*, and greatly oppoſed *Pauls* Miniſtry.

1 Tim. 1. 19. 20.
2 Tim. 4. 14.

2. A man may ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet have no true love to Chriſt. This is ſuppoſed in 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits nothing.*

Love to Chriſt is the onely noble ground of ſuffering, but a man may ſuffer much upon other ends.

1. Out of Opinion of meriting by our ſufferings, as the Papiſts. or

2. Out of vain-glory, or for applauſe among profeſſors, ſome have dyed that their names might live. or

Vicit amor patriæ, laudiſq; immenſa cupido.

3. Out of a Roman reſolution or ſtoutneſs of ſpirit.

4. Out of a deſign of profit, as *Judas* forſook all for Chriſt, hoping to mend his Market by cloſing with him. or

5. Rather to maintain an Opinion,

then for truths propagation, *Socrates* dyed for maintaining that there was but one God, but whether he dyed rather for his own Opinion, then for Gods ſake, I think it is no hard matter to determine. Thus a man may ſuffer for profeſſing Chriſt, and yet ſuffer upon wrong principles.

Now then if a man may ſuffer for Chriſt, from the profeſſion that is upon him, or ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet not truely love him, then a man may ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

14th

14. *A man may be called of God, and imbrace this call, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Judas is a famous inſtance of this truth, he was called by Chriſt himſelf, and came at the call of Chriſt, and yet *Judas* was but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Object. But is not, the being under the call of God, a proof of our intereſt in the predeſtinating love of God? doth not the Apoſtle ſay, *whom he predeſtinated them he called? Rom.* 8. 30. Nay doth he not ſay in the ſame *verſe,* *whom he called them he juſtified*? Nay doth not God call all whom he intends to ſave?

Sol. Though God calleth all thoſe that ſhall be ſaved, yet all ſhall not be ſaved whom God calleth; every man under the Goſpel is called of God in one ſenſe or other, but yet every man under the Goſpel ſhall not therefore be ſaved. *For many are called, but few are choſen.* Mat 20. 16.

There is a twofold call of God. { Internal, External,

1. There is an internal call of God, Now this call is a ſpecial work of the ſpirit by the Miniſtry of the Word, whereby a man is brought out of a ſtate of nature into a ſtate of grace, *out of darkneſs into light*, from being *veſſels of wrath*, to be made *heirs of life.* Act. 26. 18.

I grant that whoever is under this call of God, is called effectually and ſavingly, called to be a Chriſtian indeed. *Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father comes to me.* Joh. 6.45

2. There is a call of God which a man may have, and yet not be this call; there is an *External* call of God, which is by the Miniſtry of the Word.

Mat. 22 9 Now every man that lives under the Preaching of the Goſpel is thus called, God calls every ſoul of you to repent and lay a ſure foundation for Heaven and ſalvation, by the word you hear this day.

But now every man that is thus called is not therefore a Chriſtian, For.

1. Many under the call of God come to Chriſt, but are not converted to Chriſt, have nothing of the grace and life of Chriſt, ſuch as he *Mat.* 22. who when Chriſt ſent out his ſervants to bid gueſts unto the Marriage, came in at the call of Chriſt, but yet *had not on the wedding Garment*, *v.* 11. that is, had none of the grace and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt.

2. Many that are under the call of the Goſpel come to Chriſt, and yet afterwards fall away from Chriſt, as *Judas*

Judas and *Demas* did ; it is ſaid, 2 Tim. 4. 10.
when Chriſt preached a Doctrine which his Diſciples did not like, that *from that time many of his Diſciples went back, and walked no more with him.* Joh. 6. 66.

Now then, if many are under this external call of God onely, if many that come to Chriſt, are not converted to Chriſt, but fall away from Chriſt, then a man may be called of God, and yet be but almoſt *a Chriſtian.*

15. *A man may have the ſpirit of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* 15th
Balaam had the ſpirit of God given him when he bleſſed *Iſrael*, Numb. 24. 2. Balaam *ſaw* Iſrael *abiding in Tents, and the ſpirit of the Lord came upon him.* *Judas* had, for by the ſpirit he caſt out Devils, he was one of them that came to Chriſt, and ſaid, *Lord even the Devils are ſubject to us.* *Saul* had, 1 Sam. 10. 10. *Behold a company of Prophets met him, and the ſpirit of God came upon him, and he prophecyed among them.*

Object. But you'l ſay, can a man have the ſpirit of God, and yet not be a Chriſtian?

ſtian? indeed the Scripture ſaith, *If*
Rom. 8. 9. *any man have not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his*, but ſurely if any man have the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is his.

Sol. There is a having the ſpirit which is a ſure mark of Saint-ſhip.

1 Where the ſpirit is as an effectual prevailing principle of grace, and ſanctification, renewing and regenerating the heart

2 Where the ſpirit is as a potent
Ro. 8. 26. worker, *helping the ſouls infirmities.*

Joh. 14. 16. 3 Where the ſpirit is ſo as to *abide for ever.*

But now every man that hath the ſpirit, hath not the ſpirit in this manner. For,

1. A man may have the ſpirit onely tranſiently, not abidingly, the ſpirit may *be in a* man, and yet not *dwell in* a man, the ſpirit *is where ever* he *dwels*, but he doth not *dwell* where-ever he *is*, he *is* in all, but *dwels* in Saints onely; he is in all, *per divinita-*
Lumb. 1. ſent. diſt. 17 *tis præſentiam*, but dwels in Saints onely *per inhabitationis gratiam*, the

Hypocrite may have the ſpirit for a ſeaſon, but not to abide in him for ever.

2. A man may *have* the ſpirit, and yet not be *born of the ſpirit*, every true Chriſtian is born of *the ſpirit*, a Hypocrite may have the gifts of the ſpirit, but not the graces, the ſpirit may be in him by way of *illumination*, but not by way of *ſanctification*; by way of *conviction*, but not by way of *converſion*: though he may have much common grace for the good of others, yet he may have no ſpecial grace for the good of himſelf, though his profeſſion be ſpiritual, yet is his ſtate and condition carnal. Joh. 3. 4,5.

3. A man may have the ſpirit onely as a ſpirit of bondage, thus many have the ſpirit working onely to bondage. *The ſpirit of bondage is an operation of the holy Ghoſt by the law, convincing the conſcience of ſin, and of the curſe of the law, and working in the ſoul ſuch an apprehenſion of the wrath of God, as makes the thoughts of God a terrour to him.*

This ſpirit may be, and often is

without ſaving grace, this operation of the ſpirit was in *Cain* and *Judas*.

Though none that receive the ſpirit of *adoption*, but they firſt receive the ſpirit of *bondage*, yet many receive the ſpirit of bondage that never receive the ſpirit of adoption.

4. A man may have the ſpirit of God working in him, and yet it may be reſiſted by him; it is ſaid of the Jews, *they rebelled and vexed his holy ſpirit*, and the ſame ſin is charged upon their Children, *Acts* 7. 51. *ye ſtiff necked and uncircumciſed in heart, ye have always reſiſted the holy Ghoſt, as your Fathers did, ſo do ye.* Iſa. 63. 10.

The Hypocrite retains not the ſpirit ſo long as to come up to Regeneration & Adoption, but quenches the motions of it, and thereby miſcarries eternally.

5. A man may have the ſpirit and yet ſin that unpardonable ſin; he may have the Holy Ghoſt, and yet ſin the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, nay no man can ſin this ſin againſt it, but he that hath ſome degree of it.

The true beleiver hath ſo much of the ſpirit, ſuch a work of it in him, that he cannot ſin that ſin. *He that is born of God ſins not*, to wit, *that ſin unto death*, for that is meant, 1 *John* 5. 16, 17, 18. The carnal profeſſed ſinner he cannot ſin that ſin, becauſe he is carnal and *ſenſual having not the ſpirit*. A man muſt have ſome meaſure of the ſpirit, that ſins this ſin, ſo hath the Hypocrite, he is ſaid to *be partaker of the Holy Ghoſt*, *Heb.* 6. 4. and he onely is capable of ſinning the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt.

Jude 19.

Now then, if a man may have the ſpirit tranſiently onely, not abidingly, if a man may have the ſpirit, and yet not be born of the ſpirit, if he may have the ſpirit onely as a ſpirit of bondage, if a man may have the ſpirit working in him, and yet it may be reſiſted by him, if a man may have the ſpirit, and yet ſin that unpardonable ſin againſt it, then ſurely a man may have the ſpirit of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

16th

16. *A man may have faith, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, the ſtony ground*, (that is, thoſe hearers ſet out by the ſtony ground) *for a while beleived,*

Lu 8. 13.

leived. It is ſaid, *Joh.* 2.23. *that many beleived in the name of Chriſt*, yet Chriſt durſt *not commit himſelf to them.* Though they truſted in Chriſt, yet Chriſt would not truſt them, and why? *becauſe he knew all men*, *v.* 24. he knew they were rotten at root, notwithſtanding their faith, a man may have all faith even to the removing *mountains*, and yet be *nothing*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2.

Fides minime fida, quippe ex miraculis nata.

Object. But how can this be, that a man may have faith and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian? doth not our Lord Chriſt promiſe life eternal and ſalvation to all that beleive, is not this the Goſpel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that beleives ſhall be ſaved?* Mark 16. 16.

Sol. Though it is true what our Lord Chriſt ſaith, that *he that beleives ſhall be ſaved*, yet it is as true that many beleive that ſhall never be ſaved, for *Simon Magus* beleived, yea *James* ſaith, *the Devils beleive and tremble*, now none will ſay theſe ſhall be ſaved. Jam. 2. 19

As it is true, what the Apoſtle ſaith, *all men have not faith*, ſo it is as true, that 2 Theſſ. 3. 2.

that there are ſome men have faith, who are no whit the better for their faith.

You muſt know therefore there is a twofold faith,
- *Special and Saving.*
- *Common and not Saving.*

1. There is a ſaving faith.

This is called *faith of the operation of God.* Col.2.12.

It is a work of Gods own ſpirit in the ſoul.

It is ſuch a faith as reſts and caſts 1
the ſoul wholy upon Chriſt, for grace and glory, pardon and peace, ſanctification and ſalvation.

It is an united act of the whole ſoul, 2
underſtanding, will, and affections, all concurring to unite the ſoul to an alſufficient Redeemer.

3
It is ſuch a faith as *purifies the heart*, and makes it clean, it influences and gives ſtrength and life to all other graces. Act.15.9.

Now whoever hath this faith is a Chriſtian indeed, this is the

faith

Tit.1.1. *faith of Gods elect*. But then,

2. There is a common faith not ſaving, a fading and temporary faith, there is the faith of *Simon Magus*, as well as the faith of *Simon Peter*, *Simon Magus* beleived, and yet was *in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity*. Acts 8 13 & v.23. compar.

Now *Simon Magus* hath more followers then *Simon Peter*, the faith of moſt men will at laſt be found to be no better then the faith of *Simon Magus*. For,

Firſt, The faith of moſt is but a *temporary faith*, it dures for a while, and then dies and periſheth; true and ſaving faith; ſuch as is the *faith of Gods elect*, cannot die; it may fail in the Act, but not in the habit; the ſap may not be in the branch; but it is always in the root. Luk.22 32.

That faith that periſheth, that faith a man may have and periſh.

Secondly, There is a faith that lies onely in generals, not in particulars, as there is a general and particular object of faith, ſo there is a general and particular faith. The general object of faith is the whole Scripture, the particular object of faith is Chriſt in the promiſe.

Now many have a general faith, to beleive all the Scripture, and yet have no faith to make a particular application of Jeſus Chriſt in the promiſe.

Devils and Reprobates may beleive the truth of the Scripture and what is written of the dying and ſuffering of Chriſt for ſinners, but there are but few that can cloſe up themſelves in the wounds of Chriſt, and by his ſtripes fetch in healing to their ſouls.

Thirdly, There is a faith that is ſeated in the underſtanding, but not in the will, this is a very common faith, many aſſent to the truth.

They beleive all the attributes of God, that he is juſt, holy, wiſe, faithful, good, merciful, &c. But yet they reſt not on him notwithſtanding.

They beleive the Commands are true, but yet do not obey them; they beleive the promiſes are true, but yet do not imbrace and apply them, they beleive the threatnings are true, but yet do not fly from them.

Thus their faith lies in aſſent, but not conſent; they have faith to confeſs a judgment, but none to take out execution; by aſſent they lay a foundation, but never build upon it by application.

They believe that Chriſt died to ſave them that beleive, and yet they beleive not in Chriſt that they may be ſaved.

Oh my brethren it is not a *beleiving head*, but a *beleiving heart* that makes a Chriſtian: *VVith the heart man beleives to righteouſneſs*; without this *our faith is vain, we are yet in our ſins*. Ro. 10. 10. 1 Cor. 15. 17.

Fourthly, There is a faith without experience, many beleeve the Word upon hearſay to be the word of God, but they never felt the power and vertue of it upon their hearts and conſciences.

Now what good is it to beleive the *truth* of the Word, if a mans conſcience never felt the *power* of the word? what is it to beleeve the *truth* of the promiſe, if we never taſted the *ſweetneſs* of the promiſe?

We are in this caſe like a man that beleeves the deſcription others make of ſtrange Countreys, but never travelled them to know the truth; or as a Patient that beleives all the Phyſician ſays, but yet trys none of his potions.

We beleeve the word, becauſe we cannot gainſay it, but yet we have no experience of any ſaving good wrought by the Word, and ſo are but *almoſt Chriſtians*.

Fifthly, There is a faith that is without brokenneſs of heart, that doth not avail to melt or ſoften the heart, and therefore is not true faith, for the leaſt true faith is ever joyned with a bending will, and a broken heart.

Sixthly, There is a faith that transforms not the heart; Faith without fruit, that doth not bring forth the New creature in the ſoul, but leaves it in a ſtate of ſin and death.

This is a faith that makes a man a *fond Profeſſor*, but not a *ſound beleever*;

Epheſ. 4. 21. *leever*; he beleives the truth, but not *as it is in Jeſus*, for then it would change and transform him into the likeneſs of Jeſus.

He beleeves that a man muſt be changed that would be ſaved; but yet is not ſavingly changed by beleiving. Thus while others beleive to ſalvation, he beleeves to damnation; for *his web ſhall not become a* Iſa. 56.9. *garment, neither ſhall he cover himſelf with his works.*

Now then if a mans faith may be but temporary, or may lie onely in generals, or may be ſeated in the underſtanding onely, or may be without experience, or may be without a broken heart, or without a new heart; ſurely then, a man may have Heb. 6.4. faith, he may *taſte of this heavenly gift*, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

17th

17. A man may go further yet, *He may poſſibly have a love to the people of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; every kind of love to thoſe who are Saints, is not a proof of our Saintſhip: *Pharoah* loved *Joſeph*, and advance

vanced him to the ſecond place in the Kingdom, and yet *Pharaoh* was but a wicked man. *Ahab* loved *Jehoſhaphat*, and made a league with him, and married his daughter *Athaliah* to *Jehoram Jehoſhaphats* Son, and yet *Ahab* was a wicked wretch.

Object. But you will ſay, this ſeems to contradict the teſtimony of the Scripture, for that makes love to the Saints and people of God a ſure proof of our regeneration and intereſt in life eternal, 1 *Joh*. 3. 14. *We know that we have paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren.* Nay the Spirit of God putteth this as a characteriſtical diſtinction between Saints and ſinners, in the tenth verſe, *In this the children of God are manifeſt and the children of the Devil, whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

By brethren we do not underſtand *Brethren by place*; thoſe who are of the ſame Country or Nation, ſuch are called Brethren, *Rom*. 9. 3. *Act*. 7, 23, 25.

Nor do we underſtand *Brethren by*

race, thoſe who are deſcended of the ſame parents: ſuch are called brethren, *Matth.* 1.2.

But by Brethren we underſtand *brethren by grace*, and ſupernatural regeneration, ſuch as are the children of God; and theſe are the brethren whom to love is a ſure ſign that we are the children of God. Philemon 16.

Sol. To this I anſwer, That there is a love to the children of God, which is a proof of our being the children of God.

As for inſtance, when we love them as ſuch, for that very reaſon, as being the Saints of God; when we love them for the image of God which appeareth in them, becauſe of that grace and holineſs which ſhineth forth in their converſations, this is truly commendable; to love the godly for godlineſs ſake, the Saints for Saintſhip ſake, this is a ſure teſtimony of our Chriſtianity. The *love of grace* in another, is a good proof of the *life of grace* in our ſelves: There can be no better evidence of the *Spirit of Chriſt* in us, then to love the *image of Chriſt*

Chriſt in others. For this is a certain truth,that a ſinner cannot love a Saint as ſuch; An *Iſraelite* is an abomination to an *Egyptian.*

There is a contrariety and natural enmity between the two ſeeds; between the children of the World, and thoſe whom the Father in his eternal love hath choſen out of the World. Gen.3.15 Iohn 15. 1ſi.

It is likeneſs which is the great ground of love; now there is the higheſt diſſimilitude and unlikeneſs between an unregenerate ſinner and a child of God; and therefore as a child of God cannot love a ſinner as a ſinner, *In whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned,* Pſal 15. 4. he may love him as a creature; he may love his ſoul, or he may love him under ſome relation that he ſtands in to him. Thus God loves the damned ſpirits, as they are his Creatures, but as fallen Angels he hateth them with an infinite hatred. So to love a ſinner, *quatenus* a ſinner, this a child of God cannot do; ſo neither can a ſinner love a child of God as a child of God. *Simile ſimili gaudet*

That he may love a child of God, that I grant, but it is upon ſome other conſideration; he may love a perſon that *is holy*, not the perſon for his *holineſs*, but for ſome other reſpect. As

1. A man may love a child of God, for his loving, peaceable, courteous deportment to all with whom he converſeth. Religion *beautifies* the converſation of a man, and ſets him off to the eye of the World: The grace of God is no friend to a moroſe, churliſh, unmannerly behaviour among men, it provokes in us an affable demeanour and ſweetneſs to all, and where this is found it winneth reſpect and love from all.

Jam 2. 2, 3. 2. A man may love a Saint for his outward greatneſs and ſplendor in the world, men are very apt to honour worldly greatneſs: And therefore the *rich Saint* ſhall be loved and honored, whilſt the *poor Saint* is hated and deſpiſed. This is as if a man ſhould value the goodneſs of his ſword by the imbroidery of his belt; or his horſe for the beauty of his trappings, rather then for his ſtrength and ſwiftneſs.

True love to the *Children of God*, reaches to all the children of God, poor as well as rich, bond as well as free, ignoble as well as noble; for the image of Chriſt is alike amiable and lovely in all.

3. A man may love a child of God for his fidelity and uſefulneſs in his place. Where religion in the power of it taketh hold of a mans heart, it makes him true to all his betruſtments, diligent in buſineſs, faithful in all his relations; and this obligeth reſpect. A *carnal* Maſter may prize a *godly* Apprentice or Servant that makes conſcience of pleaſing his Maſter, and is diligent in promoting his intereſt.

I might inſtance in many things of the like nature, as Charity, Beauty, Wit, Learning, Parts, *&c.* which may procure love to the people of God from the men of the world: But this love is no proof of charity. For

Firſt, It is but *natural* love, ariſing from ſome carnal reſpect, or ſelf-ends: that love which is made by the Scripture an evidence of our Regeneration, is a *ſpiritual* love, the principle load-ſtone and attractive whereof is grace and holineſs, it is a love which imbraceth a *righteous man in the name of a Righteous man.*

Col. 1. 8.

Mat. 10. 41.

6

2. A carnal mans love to Saints is a limited and bounded love, it is not univerſal, *to all the ſeed*; Now as in ſin, he that doth not make conſcience of every ſin, maketh conſcience of no ſin as ſin; ſo he who doth not love all in whom the Image of Chriſt is found, loveth none, for that of the Image of Chriſt, which is found in them.

Eſter 10. 3.

Now then if the love we bear to the people of God may poſſibly ariſe from natural love onely, or from ſome carnal reſpect, or if it be a limited love, not extended to all the people of God, then it is poſſible that a man may love the people of God, and yet be no better then *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

18 6le 18. *A man may obey the commands of God,*

God, yea many of the commands of God, and yet be but almoſt a Christian. *Balaam* ſeems very conſcientious of ſteering his courſe by the compaſs of Gods command; when *Balak* ſent to him to come and curſe the people of God, ſaith *Balaam*, *If* Balak *would give me his houſe full of ſilver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God*, Numb. 22. 18. and ſo in the 38. *v.* ſaith he, *the word that God putteth in my mouth that ſhall I ſpeak.* The young man went far in obedience, *Mark* 10. 20. *all theſe have I obſerved from my youth up.* and yet he was but an Hypocrite, for he forſook Chriſt after all.

Numb, 23. 12, 20, 26.

Object.

But is it not ſaid, *he that hath my commandements and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me ſhall be loved of my Father and I will love him, and manifeſt my ſelf unto him*; John 14. 21. and doth not our Lord Chriſt tell us expreſly, *ye are my friends if ye do what I command you?* John 15. 14. and can a man be the friend of Chriſt, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian?*

Sol. I anſwer, that there is an obedience to the commands of Chriſt, which is a ſure proof of our Chriſtianity and friendſhip to Chriſt.

This obedience hath a three-fold property.

It is
Evangelical,
Univerſal,
Continual.

Firſt, It is an *evangelical* obedience, and that both in matter and manner, ground and end.

In the matter of it, and that is what God requires, *John* 15. 14. *ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you.*

In the *manner of* it, and that is according as God requires, John 4. 24. *God is a ſpirit and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.*

In the *ground* of it, and that is a *pure heart, a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned*, 1 Tim. 1. 5.

In the end of it, and that is the honour and glory of God, *whatever* *ye do, do all to the Glory of God,* 1 Cor. 10. 31.

Secondly, It is an *univerſal* obedience, which extendeth it ſelf to all the Commands of God alike, it reſpects the duties of both Tables, ſuch was the obedience of *Caleb*, *who followed the Lord fully*, and of *David who had reſpect to all the commands.*

Numb. 14. 24. Pſal. 119. 6.

Thirdly, It is a *continual obedience*, a putting the hand to Gods Plow without looking back, *I have inclined my heart to performe thy ſtatutes alway even to the end.* Pſal. 119. 112.

Incipere multorum eſt, perſeverare paucorum, Bern.

He that thus obeys the Command of God is a Chriſtian indeed, a friend of Chriſt indeed, but all obedience to the commands of God is not this obedience. For,

1. There is a partial obedience, a peece-meal Religion, when a man obeys God in one command and not another, own's him in one duty and not another, when a man ſeems to make conſcience of the duties of one Table, and not of the duties of another. This is the Religion of moſt.

Now this obedience is no obedience, for as he that doth not love God *above all*, doth not love God *at all*; ſo he that doth not obey *all* the commands *univerſally*, cannot be ſaid to obey *any* command *truly*. It is ſaid of thoſe in *Samaria*, that they *feared the Lord, and ſerved their own Gods, after their own manner*, 2 Kings 17. 33. and yet in the very next verſe, it is ſaid, *they feared not the Lord*, ſo that their fear of the Lord was no fear: in like manner that obedience to God is no obedience which is but a partial and peice-meal obedience.

2. A man may obey much, and yet be in his old nature, and if ſo, then all his obedience in that eſtate, is but *Splendidum peccatum* a painted ſin, *he that offereth an oblation is as if he offered ſwines blood, and he that burneth incenſe as if he bleſſed an Idol*. Iſa. 66. 3. The nature muſt be renewed before the command can be rightly obeyed, for a *corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit*. Matth. 7. 18.

Whatever a mans performances

are, they cannot be called *obedience*, whilſt the heart remaineth unregenerate, becauſe the *principle* is falſe and unſound; every duty done by a beleiver is accepted of God as a part of his obedience to the will of God, though it be done in much weakneſs, becauſe though the beleivers *hand* is weak, yet his *heart* is right, the Hypocrite may have the moſt *active hand*, but the beleiver hath the moſt *faithful* and *ſincere heart*. Eph. 6. 6. Rom. 6. 17.

3. A man may obey the *law*, and yet have no love to the *Law-giver*; a carnal heart may do the command of God, but he cannot love God, and therefore cannot do it aright, for love to God is the foundation and ſpring of all true obedience, every command of God is to be done in love, this is the fulfilling *of the law*, Rom. 13. 10. The Apoſtle ſaith, *Though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned*; theſe ſeem to be acts of the higheſt obedience, yet *if I have not love, it profits me nothing*. 1 Cor. 13, 3.

4. I might add, that a man may be much in obedience from ſiniſter and baſe ſelfiſh ends, as the *Phariſes*, *prayed much*, *gave much alms*, *faſted much*, but our Lord Chriſt tells us that it was *that they might be ſeen of men*, *and have glory of men*, Mat. 6. 2, 5, 16. moſt of the Hypocrites piety, empties it ſelf into vain glory, and therefore he is but an *empty vine* in all he doth, becauſe *he bringeth forth fruit to himſelf*. Hoſ. 10. 1.

It is the end that juſtifies the action, indeed a *good end* cannot make a *bad action good*, but yet the want of a *good end*, makes a *good action bad*.

Now then if a man may obey the commands of God, partially and by halves, if he may do it, and yet be in his natural ſtate, if he may obey the commands of God, and yet not love God, if the ends of his obedience may be ſinful and unwarrantable, then a man may be much in obeying the Commands of God, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

19th 19. *A man may be ſanctified*, *and yet*

yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, every kind of Sanctification doth not make a man a new creature, for many are ſanctified that are never renewed. You read in the 10. *Chap.* to the *Hebrews* and the 29. *verſ.* of them that count the *blood of the Covenant wherewith they were ſanctified an unholy thing.*

Object. But doth not the Scripture tell us, *that both he that ſanctifieth, and they who are ſanctified, are all one, for which cauſe he is not aſhamed to call them Brethren?* Heb. 2. 11. and can a man be one with Chriſt, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian?*

Sol. To this, I anſwer, you muſt know there is a twofold work of ſanctification ſpoken of in Scripture.

The one common and ineffectual.

The other, ſpecial and effectual.

That work of *ſanctification* which is true and effectual is a work of the ſpirit of God in the ſoul, inabling it to the *mortifying* of all ſin, to the *obeying* of every command, to *walking* with God in all well-pleaſing.

Rom. 8. 13. 1 Pet. 1. 2 Heb. 13. 21.

Now whoever is *thus ſanctified* is one with *him that ſanctifieth*, Chriſt will not be aſhamed to call ſuch *brethren*, for they are Epheſ. 5. 30. *fleſh of his fleſh, and bone of his bone.*

But then there is a more common work of ſanctification, which is ineffectual as to the two great works of *dying to ſin*, and *living to God.* Ro.6. 11. This kind of *ſanctification* may help to reſtrain ſin, but not to *mortifie* ſin, it may lop off the *boughs*, but it layeth not the Ax to the *root* of the tree, it ſweeps and garniſhes the room Mat. 12. 44. with common vertues, but doth not adorn it with ſaving graces, ſo that a man is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, notwithſtanding this ſanctification.

Or thus, there is an { *Inward* and *Outward* } Sanctification.

Inward Sanctification, is that which deals with the ſoul and its faculties; underſtanding, conſcience, will, memory and affections; Outward Sanctification is that which deals with the life and converſation, both theſe muſt concur to make a man a Chriſtian indeed, therefore the Apoſtle puts them together in his prayer for the *Theſſalonians*. 1 *Theſ.* 5. 23.

The God of peace ſanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole ſpirit and ſoul and body be preſerved blameleſs unto the comming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

A man is then ſanctified wholly when he is ſanctified both inwardly and outwardly, both in heart and affections, and in life and converſation. Outward ſanctification is not enough without Inward, nor inward without outward, we muſt have both *clean hands, and a pure heart*. *Pſal.* 24. 4. the heart muſt be pure that we may not incur *blame* from within, and the hands muſt be clean that we may not incur *ſhame* from without, we muſt have *hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and bodies waſhed with pure water*. We muſt *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. inward purity is the moſt excellent, but without the outward it is

Non magna munera, ſed immunis manus menſq; ſincera deo placent.

Heb. 10. 22.

not ſufficient, the true Chriſtian is made up of both.

Mat. 23. 25. Now many have clean hands, but unclean hearts, they *waſh the outſide of the cup and Platter*, when all is filthy within; Now the former without the latter profiteth a man no more then it profited *Pilate*, who condemned Chriſt, to waſh his hands in the preſence of the people, *Manus abluit & cor polluit*, he waſhed his hands of the blood of Chriſt, and yet had a hand in the death of Chriſt. The *Egyptian* Temples were beautiful on the outſide, but within you ſhould find nothing but ſome Serpent or Crocodile, *He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly*, *Rom.* 2. 28. *Judas* was a *Saint* without, but a *ſinner* within, openly a *Diſciple*, but ſecretly a *Devil*. Mat. 27. 24. Ioh. 6. 70

Some pretend to inward ſanctity without outward; this is the pretence of the open ſinner, though I ſometimes drop an idle fooliſh word, ſaith he, or though I ſometimes ſwear an Oath, yet I think no hurt, I thank God, my heart is as good as the beſt, ſuch are like the ſinner *Moſes* mentions, that *bleſſed himſelf in his heart ſaying, I ſhall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, to add drunkneſs to thirſt*, *Deut.* 19. 20.

Some pretend outward ſanctity without inward; ſuch are like the *Scribes* and *Phariſes*, who *outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of Hypocriſie and iniquity*, Mat. 23. 28. fair profeſſors but foul ſinners.

Inward ſanctity, without *outward* is *impoſſible*, for it will reforme the life; *outward ſanctity* without *inward* is *unprofitable*, for it will not reforme the heart; a man is not a true Chriſtian without both, the body doth not make a man without the ſoul, nor the ſoul without the body, both are eſſential to the being of man, ſo the ſanctification of both, are eſſential to the being of the *new man*; True Sanctification begins at the heart, but works out into the life, and converſation, and if ſo, then a man may attain to an outward ſanctification, and yet for want of the inward, be no

better

better then almoſt a Chriſtian.

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20. And ſo I ſhall end this long purſuit of the almoſt Chriſtian in his progreſs Heaven-ward, with this one general concluſion.

A man may do all (as to external duties and worſhip) that a true Chriſtian can, and when he hath done all, be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

You muſt know all the Commands of God have an *intra* and an *extra*, there is (as I may ſay,) the body and the ſoul of the command.

And accordingly there is an *internal* and an *external* worſhip of God.

—Now the *internal* acts of worſhipping of God, are to love God, to fear God, to delight in God, to truſt in God, &c.

The *external* acts of Worſhipping God, are by praying, teaching, hearing, &c.

Now there is a vaſt difference between theſe internal and external acts of Worſhip, (and indeed ſuch a difference there is, that they diſtinguiſh the *altogether*, from the *almoſt* Chriſtian,

ſtian. The ſincere beleiver from the unſound profeſſor; and indeed in this very thing, the main difference between them doth lie.

1. *Internal* acts of Worſhip are good, *propter fieri*, the goodneſs doth adhere intrinſecally to the thing done, a man cannot love God nor fear God, but it will be imputed to him for a gracious act, and a great part of his Holineſs.

But now *external* acts of Worſhip, are not denominated good, ſo much from the matter done, *propter fieri*, as from the manner of doing them; a man cannot ſin in loving and delighting in God, but he may ſin in praying and hearing &c. for want of a due manner.

2. *Internal* acts of worſhip put a goodneſs into *external*, it is our faith, our love, our fear of God, that makes our duties good.

3. They better the heart, and greaten the degrees of a mans holineſs; external duties do not always do this, a man may pray, and yet his heart never the holier, he may

hear the word, and yet his heart never the ſofter; but now the more a man fears God, the wiſer he is, *Prov.* 1. 7. the more a man loves God, the holier he is; love is the perfection of holineſs; we ſhall never be perfect in holineſs, till we come to be perfect in love.

4. There is ſuch an excellency in this *internal* worſhip, that he who mixes it with his *external* duties is a true Chriſtian when he doth leaſt; but without this mixture, he is but almoſt *a Chriſtian*, that doth moſt.

Internal acts of Worſhip, joyned with *outward*, ſanctifie them and make them *accepted* of God, though few; *external* acts of Worſhip without *inward*, make them abhorred of God, though they be *never ſo many.*

So that though the almoſt Chriſtian may do all thoſe duties in Hypocriſie, which a true Chriſtian doth in *ſincerity*, nay though in doing *external* duties, he may out-do the true Chriſtian, (as the comet makes a greater blaze then the true Stars; if *Eliah* faſt and mourn, *Baals* Prieſts will cut their fleſh.)

Yet he cannot do thoſe ***internal*** duties that the meaneſt true Chriſtian can.

The almoſt Chriſtian can pray, but he cannot love God, he can teach or hear, &c. but he cannot take delight in God.

Mark *Job's* query concerning the Hypocrite, ***will he delight himſelf in the Almighty*** ?

Iob 27. 10.

He will ***pray*** to the Almighty, but will he ***delight*** himſelf in the Almighty; will he take pleaſure in God?

This is *Chriſtianorum propria virtus.*

Ah no! he will not, he cannot.

Delight in God, ariſe, from a ſuitableneſs between the faculty and the object, now none more unſuitable then God and a carnal heart.

Delight ariſes from the ***having*** what we ***deſire***, and from ***enjoying*** what we ***have***; how then can he delight in God, that neither ***enjoyeth***, nor ***hath***, nor truely ***deſireth*** God?

Delight in God is one of the higheſt exerciſes of grace, and therefore how can he delight in God that hath no grace?

Hæc propria eſt delectationis materia, ſi cum habeas quæ deſideraveris, deſideratis perfruaris Pincd in Loc.

Why then ſhould any Saint of God

be diſcouraged when he hears how far the almoſt Chriſtian may go in the way to Heaven, when as he that is the weakeſt true beleiver, that hath the leaſt true grace, goes farther then he, for he beleives in, and loves God.

Should the *almoſt Chriſtian* do leſs (as to matter of external duties) yet if he had but the leaſt true faith, the leaſt ſincerity of love to Chriſt, he would ſurely be ſaved; and ſhould the true Chriſtian do ten times more duties then he doth, yet had he not faith in Chriſt, and love to Chriſt, he would ſurely be rejected.

Oh therefore let not any weak beleiver, be diſcouraged, though Hypocrites may out-do them, and go beyond them in duty, for all their duties are done in Hypocriſie, but your faith and love to God in duties, is a proof of your ſincerity.

I do not ſpeak this to diſcourage any ſoul in the doing of duties, or to beat down outward performances, but to rectifie the ſoul in the doing of them.

As the Apoſtle ſaith, *covet earneſtly the beſt gifts, but yet I ſhew unto you a more excellent way*; ſo I ſay, covet the beſt gifts, covet to be much in duties, much in prayer, much in hearing, &c. But yet I ſhew you a more excellent way, and that is, the way of faith and love, pray much, but then beleive much too. Hear much, read much, but then love God much too. Delight in the Word and Ordinances of God much, but then delight in the God of Ordinances more. 1 Cor. 12 31.

And when you are moſt *in duties* as to your *uſe* of them, Oh then, be ſure to be *above duties* as to your *reſting* and dependance upon them.

Would you be Chriſtians indeed, altogether Chriſtians? oh then, be much in the uſe and exerciſe of ordinances, but be much more in faith and dependance upon Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs: when your obedience is *moſt to the command*, then let your faith be moſt upon *the promiſe*.

The profeſſor reſts in his duties,

and

and ſo is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, but you muſt be ſure to reſt upon the Lord Chriſt, this is the way to be *altogether Chriſtians*, for *if ye beleive then are ye* Abrahams *ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe.*

And thus I have anſwered the firſt query, to wit how far may a man go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian?

1. He may have much knowledge.
2. He may have great gifts.
3. He may have a high profeſſion.
4. He may do much againſt ſin.
5. He may deſire grace.
6. He may tremble at the Word.
7. He may delight in the Word.
8. He may be a Member of the Church of Chriſt.
9. He may have great hopes of Heaven.
10. He may be under great and viſible changes.
11. He may be very zealous in the matters of Religion.
12. He may be much in prayer.

13. He may ſuffer for Chriſt.

14. He may be called of God.

15. He may in ſome ſenſe have the ſpirit of God.

16. He may have ſome kind of faith.

17. He may love the people of God.

18. He may go far in obeying the Commands of God.

19. He may be in ſome ſenſe ſanctified.

20. He may do all (as to external duties) that a true Chriſtian can, and yet be no better then almoſt a Chriſtian.

The ſecond Queſtion.

Why or whence is it that many men go ſo far as that they come to be almoſt Chriſtians?

Firſt, *It may be to anſwer the call of conſcience*, though few men have grace, yet all men have conſcience.

Now do but obſerve, and you ſhall ſee how far conſcience may go in this work.

1. *Conſcience owns a God, and that this*

this God muſt be worſhipped and ſerved by the creature, Atheiſts in practice we have many, ſuch as the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, *Tit.* 1. 16. *they profeſs they know God, but in works they deny him.*

But Atheiſts in judgment none can be, *Tully* a Heathen could ſay, *nulla gens tam barbara*, &c.

Now their being ſuch a light in conſcience as to diſcover that their is a God, and that he muſt be Worſhipped; by the help of farther light, the light of the word, a man may be inabled to do much in the ways of God, and yet his heart without a dram of grace.

2. Know this, *that natural conſcience is capable of great improvements from the means of grace*; ſitting under the ordinances, may exceedingly heighten the indowments of Conſcience; though they do not ſanctifie conſcience, it may be much *regulated*; though it be not at all *renewed*, it may be *inlightned*; *convinced*, and yet never *ſavingly converted* and *changed.*

Ye read in *Heb.* 6. 4. of ſome that *were*

were once inlightned**, **and taſted of the Heavenly gift, and were made ***partakers of the holy ghoſt.*** What work ſhall we call this? It could not be a ſaving work, a true change and converſion of ſtate, for notwithſtanding this inlightning, and *taſting*, and *partaking*, yet they are here ſaid *to fall away*, v. 6.

Had it been a true work of grace, they could never have fallen away from that, a beleiver may fall, but he cannot *fall away*; he may *fall foully*, but he can never *fall finally*, for *underneath are the everlaſting arms*; his faith is eſtabliſhed in the ſtrength of that prayer of Chriſt, that our *faith fail not*, nay he tels us expreſly, that it is *eternal life* which he gives, from which we *ſhall never periſh*, John 10. 28.

Deut. 33. 27.

Luke 22. 32.

This work then here ſpoken of cannot be any ſaving work, becauſe it is not an *abiding* work, for they that are under it, are ſaid to fall away from it; but though it be not a ſaving work, yet it is a *ſupernatural* work, it is an improvement made by the word,

word upon the conſciences of men through the power of the Spirit; and therefore they are ſaid *to taſt the good word of God*, and to be made *partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*, they have not the ſpirit abiding in them *ſavingly*, but ſtriving with them, and working upon them *convincingly*, to the awakening and ſetting conſcience on work. And conſcience thus ſtirred may carry a man very far in Religion, and in the duties of the Goſpel, and yet be but a *natural* conſcience.

A common work of the ſpirit may ſtead a man very much in the duties of Religion, though it muſt be a *ſpecial work* of the ſpirit that ſteads a man to ſalvation, a man may have the *aſſiſting preſence* of the ſpirit inabling him to preach and pray, and yet he may periſh for want of the *renewing preſence* of the ſpirit, inabling him to beleive, *Judas* had the former, and yet periſhed for want of the latter, he had the ſpirit aſſiſting him to caſt out devils, but yet he had not the ſpirit *renewing* him, for he was caſt out himſelf, Thus a man may have an *improved* conſcience, and yet be a ſtranger to a *renewed* conſcience; and conſcience thus improved, may put a man very much upon duty.

I pray God none of us miſtake a conſcience thus *improved* by the word, for a conſcience *renewed* by the ſpirit, the miſtake is very eaſie, eſpecially when a life of duties is the fruit of it.

3. *The conſcience of a natural man is ſubject to diſtreſs and trouble*, though a natural conſcience is not *ſanctified* with grace, yet it is often *troubled* at ſin, trouble of conſcience is not incident to beleivers onely, but ſometimes to unbeleivers alſo. A beleivers conſcience, is ſometimes troubled when his ſin is truely pardoned, and a natural mans conſcience is troubled *for* ſin, though it is never freed *from* ſin. God ſometimes ſets the word home upon the ſinners conſcience and applies the terrours of the law to it, and this fills the ſoul with fear and horrour, of death, and hell, now in this caſe the ſoul uſually betakes it

ſelf to a life of duties, meerly to fence trouble out of conſcience.

2Sam.14. 30, 31. When *Abſalom* ſets fire on *Joabs* corn fields, then he runs to him, though he refuſed before, ſo when God lets a ſpark of Hell (as it were) fall upon the ſinners conſcience in applying the terrours of the word, this drives the ſinner to a life of duties, which he never minded before; The ground of many a mans ingaging in Religion, is the trouble of his conſcience, and the end of his continuing in Religion is the quieting of conſcience; if conſcience would never check him, God ſhould never from him.

Natural conſcience hath a voice, and ſpeaks aloud many times in the ſinners ears, and telleth him, this ought not to be done, God muſt not be forgotten, the commands of God ought not to be ſlighted, living in ſin will be the ruine of the ſoul, and hence it is that a natural man runs to duties, and takes up a lifeleſs and graceleſs profeſſion that he may thereby ſilence conſcience.

As a man ſick in his ſtomack, what

ever ſweet morſel he hath eaten, he brings up all; and although it was *ſweet* in the eating, yet it is bitter in the riſing.

So it fareth with the ſinner, when he is Sermon-ſick, or Conſcience-ſick, though his ſin was ſweet in the practice, yet the thought of it riſeth bitter upon the conſcience, and then his profeſſion of religion is the pill he rouleth about in his mouth, to take away the bitterneſs of ſins taſt.

4. *Natural conſcience inlightned by the word may diſcover to a man much of the miſery of a natural ſtate*, though not effectually to bring him out of it, yet ſo as to make him reſtleſs and weary in it; it may ſhew a ſinner his nakedneſs, and hereupon the ſoul runneth to a life of duties, thinking hereby to ſtead the miſery of his caſe, and to make a covering for his nakedneſs. It is ſaid *Gen.* 3. 7. That when *Adam and Eve ſaw they were naked*, *they ſewed Fig-leaves together and made themſelvelves a covering.* So when once the ſinner ſeeth his nakedneſs and vileneſs by reaſon of ſin,

whereas he ſhould run to Chriſt, and cloſe with him, and beg his righteouſneſs for a covering, *that the ſhame of his nakedneſs do not appear*, Rev. 3. 18. he rather runneth to a life of duties and performances, and thus maketh himſelf a covering wlth the *fig-leaves* of a profeſſion without Chriſt truely imbraced, and conſcience at all renewed.

Naural man would fain be his own Saviour, and ſupoſeth a change of ſtate to be a thing within his own power, and that the true work of grace lieth in leaving off the practiſe of ſin, and taking up a life of duties, and therefore upon this principle doth many a graceleſs profeſſour outſtrip a ſound beleiver, for he reſteth in his own performances, and hopeth theſe will commend him to God.

Queſt. If *a natural conſcience may go thus far, then what difference is there between this natural conſcience in Hypocrites and ſinners, and a renewed conſcience in beleivers?* or how may I know whether the workings of my conſcience be the workings of nature onely, or elſe of grace wrought in it.

Anſw. I grant that it is difficult to diſtinguiſh between the one and the other, and the difficulty hath a twofold riſe.

1. It ariſeth from that Hypocriſie that is in the beſt Saints, the *weakeſt beleiver* is no *Hypocrite*, but yet there is ſome *Hypocriſie* in the *ſtrongeſt beleiver*; where there is *moſt grace*, there is *ſome ſin*, and where there is *moſt ſincerity*, yet there is *ſome Hypocriſie*.

Now it is very incident to a tender conſcience, to miſgive and miſtruſt its ſtate, upon the ſight of any ſin; when he ſees Hypocriſie break out in any duty or performance, then he complaines ſurely my aims are not ſincere, my conſcience is not renewed, it is but natural conſcience *inlightened*, not by grace *purged and changed*.

2. It ariſeth from that reſemblance there is between *grace* and *Hypocriſie*, for *Hypocriſie* is a *reſemblance* of grace

with-

Pigmalion made an image ſo lively, that he deceived himſelf, and taking the Picture for a perſon fell in love with the Picture.

without *ſubſtance* , the *likeneſs of* grace, without the *life of* grace. There is no grace but a Hypocrite may have ſomewhat like it; and there is no duty done by a Chriſtian, but an Hypocrite may outſtrip him in it. Now when one that hath not true grace ſhall go farther then one that hath, this may well make the beleiver queſtion whether his grace be true or not; or whether the workings of his conſcience, be not the workings of nature onely rather then of grace wrought in it.

But to anſwer the Queſtion, you may make a judgement of this in theſe ſeven particulars.

1. *If a natural mans conſcience, putteth him upon duty, he doth uſually bound himſelf in the Work of God*: his duties are limited, his obedience is a limited obedience, he doth one duty and neglecteth another, he picketh and chuſeth among the Commands of God, obeyeth one and ſlighteth another. Thus much is enough, what need any more, if I do thus and thus, I ſhall go to Heaven at laſt.

But now where Conſcience is renewed by grace, there it is otherwiſe; Though there may be many weakneſſes which accompanie its duties, yet that ſoul never bounds it ſelf in working after God, it never *loves* God *ſo much* but ſtill it would love him *more*, nor *ſeeks* him *ſo much*, but ſtill it would *ſeek him more*, nor doth it *ſerve* God *ſo well* at any time, but ſtill it makes conſcience of ſerving him better. *A renewed conſcience is a ſpring of univerſal obedience*, *Pſal.* 119. 128. for it ſeeth an *infinite excellency*, and *goodneſs*, and *holineſs* in God, and therefore would fain have its ſervice riſe up towards ſome proportionableneſs to the object; a God of infinite excellency and goodneſs, ſhould have infinite love ſaith Conſcience, a holy God ſhould have ſervice from a holy heart ſaith conſcience. Pſ.119.20

Now then, If I ſet bounds to my love to God, or to my ſervice to God, if I limit my ſelf in my obedience to the holy God, love one command and ſlight another, obey in one point, and yet lie croſs in another, then is all I do but the working of a *natural conſcience*: But on the other hand, if I love the Lord with my *whole heart*, and *whole ſoul*, and ſerve him with *all my might*, and *ſtrength*, *If I eſteem all Gods precepts concerning all things to be right*, *and have reſpect to all the Commands*, then is my love and ſervice from a *renewed conſcience*.

Mat. 22. 37. Mark 12. 33.

2. *If a natural mans conſcience check or accuſe for ſin, then he ſeeketh to ſtop the mouth of it, but not to ſatisfie it*, moſt of the natural mans duties, are to ſtill and ſtifle conſcience.

But now the beleiver chuſeth rather to let conſcience cry, then to ſtop the mouth of it, until he can do it upon good terms, until he can fetch in ſatisfaction to it, from the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, by freſh acts of faith, apprehended and applied.

The natural man ſeeketh to ſtill the *noiſe* of conſcience, rather then to remove the *guilt*, the beleiver ſeeketh the removal of guilt, by the application of Chriſts blood, and then conſcience is quiet of it ſelf. As a fooliſh man, having a Mote fallen into his eye, and making it water, he *wipeth* away the water, and labours to keep it dry, but never *ſearcheth* his eye to get out the Mote; but a wiſe man mindeth not ſo much the *wiping* as the *ſearching* his eye, ſome-what is got in, and that cauſeth the watering, and therefore the cauſe muſt be removed.

Now then if when conſcience accuſeth for ſin, I take up a life of duties, a forme of godlineſs to ſtop the mouth of Conſcience, and if hereupon conſcience be ſtill and quiet, then is this but a *natural conſcience*; but if when conſcience checks, it will not be ſatisfied with any thing but the blood of Chriſt, and therefore I uſe duties to bring me to Chriſt, and if I beg the ſprinckling of his blood upon conſcience, and labour not ſo much to ſtop the mouth of it, as to remove guilt *from it*, then is this a *renewed conſcience*.

3. *There is no natural man let him go never ſo far, let him do never ſo much*

in matters of Religion, but ſtill he hath his Dalilah, his boſome luſt. Judas went far, but he carried his *covetouſneſs* along with him, *Herod* went far, *he did many things* under the force of *Johns* Miniſtry, but yet there was one thing he did not, he did not put away *his Brothers Wife*, his *Herodias* lay in his boſome ſtill. Nay commonly all the natural mans duties are to hide ſome ſin, his profeſſion is onely made uſe of for a *coverſhame*. Ioh.12.6. Mar.6.20 v.17, 18.

But now the renewed conſcience, hateth all ſin, as *David* did, *I hate every falſe way*; he *regardeth* no *iniquity in his heart*, he uſeth duties, not to cover ſin, but to help work down, and work out ſin. Pſa. 119. 128. Pſa.66.18

Now then, if I profeſs Religion, if I make mention of the Name of the Lord, *and make my boaſt of the law, and yet through breaking the law, diſhonour God*, if I live in the love of any ſin, and make uſe of my profeſſion to cover it, then am I an *Hypocrite*, and my duties flow but *from a natural conſcience*, but on the other hand, if I *name the name of the* Ro.2.23.

the Lord Jeſus, and withal *depart from inquity*, if I uſe duties, not to cover, but to diſcover and mortifie ſin, then am I *upright* before God, and my duties flow from *a renewed conſcience.* 2 Tim. 2. 19.

4. *A natural man pride's himſelf in his duties*, if he be much in duty, then he is much lifted up under duty; ſo did the *Phariſee*, *Luk.* 18. *God I thank thee that I am not as other men are*, and why? where lay the difference? why *I faſt twice in the week*, *I give Tithes of all*, &c. Luke 18. 11, 12.

But now take a gracious heart, a renewed conſcience, and when his duties are at *higheſt*, then is his heart at *loweſt*; Thus it was with the Apoſtle *Paul*, he was much in ſervice, *in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon*, Preaching up the Lord Jeſus with all boldneſs and earneſtneſs, and yet very humble in a ſenſe of his own unworthineſs under all, *I am not worthy to be called an Apoſtle*, 1 Cor. 15. 9. *To me who am leſs then the leaſt of all Saints*, *is this grace given that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles*, *the unſearchable riches of* 2 Tim 4, 2

Chriſt Epheſ. 3. 8. and again in the 1 *Tim.* 1. 15. *of ſinners I am cheif:* thus a beleiver when he is *higheſt* in duties, then is he *loweſt* in humility; duty *puffeth up the* Hypocrite, but a beleiver comes away *humbled*; and why? becauſe the Hypocrite hath had no viſions of God, he hath ſeen onely his own gifts and parts, and this *exalteth* him, but the beleiver hath ſeen God, and injoyed communion with God, and this *humbleth* him: communion with God, though it be very *refreſhing*, yet it is alſo very *abaſing* and *humbling* to the creature, *Jerome* obſerveth on *Zephaniah*, 1 *Chap.* 1. *v.* where it is ſaid that *Cuſhi was the ſon of Geduliah*, *the ſon of Amariah*, That *Amariah* ſignifieth the *Word of the Lord*, *Gedaliah* ſignifieth the *greatneſs of the Lord*, and *Cuſhi* is interpreted *humility*, or my *Ethiopian.*

So that, ſaith he, from *the Word of the Lord* cometh a ſight of the *greatneſs of the Lord*, and from a ſight of the *greatneſs of the Lord,* cometh *Humility.*

Now then if I pride my ſelf in any

duty, and am puffed up under my performances, then have I not ſeen nor met with God in any duty.

But on the other hand, if when my gifts are at *higheſt*, my heart is at *loweſt*, if when my ſpirit is moſt *raiſed*, my heart is then moſt *humbled*, if in the middeſt of all my ſervices I can maintain a ſence of mine own unworthineſs, if *Cuſhi* be the Son of *Gedaliah*, then have I ſeen and had communion with God in duty, and my performances are from a *renewed conſcience*.

5. *Look what that is to which the heart doth ſecretly render the glory of a duty, and that is the principle of the duty*, in *Habakkuk* 1. 16. ye read of them that *Sacrifice to their net*, *and burn incenſe to their drag*, where the glory of an action is rendered to a mans *ſelf*, the principle of that action is *ſelf*: all *Rivers* run *into the Sea*, that is an argument they came *from the Sea*, ſo when all a mans duties, terminate in *ſelf*, then is *ſelf* the principle of all. Eccl. 1. 7.

Now all the natural mans duties

run into himſelf, he was never by a through work of grace, truely caſt out of himſelf, and brought to deny himſelf, and therefore he can riſe no higher then himſelf in all he doth, he was never brought to be *poor in ſpirit*, and ſo to live upon another, to be carryed out of all duties to Jeſus Chriſt.

Pſ.115.1. But the beleiver giveth the glory of all his ſervices to God, what ever ſtrength or life there is in duty, God hath all the glory, for he is by grace outed of himſelf, and therefore ſeeth no excellency or worthineſs in ſelf.

I laboured more abundantly then they all, ſaith the Apoſtle, but to whom doth he aſcribe the glory of this? to ſelf? no, *yet not I*, ſaith he, *but the grace of God which was with me*, 1 *Cor*. 15. 10. when ever the grace of Chriſt is wrought in the heart as a principle of duty, you ſhall find the ſoul when Gal.2.20. it is moſt carried out, with a *yet not I* in the mouth of it, *I live, yet not I, I laboured more abundantly then all, yet not I*, ſelf is diſclamed, and Chriſt moſt advanced when it is from grace that the heart is quickned; the *twenty-four Elders caſt their crowns at Chriſts feet*, *Rev.* 4. 10.

There are two things very hard, one is to take the ſhame of our ſins to our ſelves, the other is, to give the glory of our ſervices to Chriſt.

Now then, *if I ſacrifice to my own net*, if I aim at my own credit or profit, and give the glory of all I do to ſelf, then do I *ſow to the fleſh*, and was never yet caſt out of ſelf, but act onely from a *natural conſcience*; but if I give the glory of all my ſtrength and life in duty onely to God, if I magnifie grace in all, and can truely ſay in all I do, *yet not I*, then am I truely caſt out of ſelf, and do what I do with a *renewed conſcience*. Gal. 6. 8.

6. *Though a natural conſcience may put a man much upon ſervice, yet it never preſſeth to the attainment of holineſs*, ſo that he carrieth an unſanctified heart under all. How long was *Judas* a profeſſor, and yet not one dram of grace that he had got, the *fooliſh Virgins* (you know) *took their lamps, but took no oyle in their veſſels*, Mat. 25. 3.

that is, they looked more after a profeſſion then after ſanctification.

But now when a *renewed conſcience* putteth a man upon duty, it is ſucceſſed with the growth of holineſs; as grace helpeth to the *doing* of duty, ſo duty helpeth to the *growing* of grace, a beleiver is the more *holy* and the more *heavenly* by his being much in duties.

Now then if I am much in a life of *duties*, and yet a ſtranger to a life of *holineſs*, if I maintain a high profeſſion, and yet have not a true work of *ſanctification*, if (like children in the Rickets) I grow *big* in the *head*, but *weak* in the *feet*, then have I gifts and parts but no grace: and though I am much in ſervice, yet have I but a *natural conſcience*; but on the other hand, if the holineſs of my converſation carrieth a proportion to my profeſſion, if I am not a hearer *of the word onely*, but a *doer of it*, if grace groweth in ſeaſons of dutie, then do I act in the things of God from a *renewed Conſcience.*

7. And laſtly, *if a natural conſci-*

ence be the ſpring of duty, why then this ſpring runs faſteſt at firſt, and ſo abateth, and at laſt dryeth up, but if a *renewed conſcience*, a ſanctified heart be the ſpring of duty, then this ſpring will never dry up, it will run always, from firſt to laſt, and run quicker at laſt then at firſt. *I know thy works, and the laſt to be more then the firſt*, Rev. 2. 19. *The righteous ſhall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands ſhall be ſtronger and ſtronger*, Job. 17. 9.

Queſt. But you will ſay, why doth that man abate and languiſh in his duties, that doth them from a natural conſcience, more then he that doth them from a renewed conſcience?

Anſw. The reaſon is becauſe they grow upon a failable root, a decaying root, and that is *nature*; *nature* is a *fading* root, and ſo are all it fruits *fading*; but the duties done by a *renewed conſcience*, are fruits that grow upon a laſting root, and that is Chriſt, *gifts have their root in nature, but grace hath its root in Chriſt*, and therefore the *weakeſt grace*, ſhall out-live the greateſt *gifts and parts*, becauſe there is life in the root of one, and not in the root of the other: gifts and grace differ like the *Leather* of your *Shooe* and the *Skin* of your *Foot*, take a pair of Shooes that have the thickeſt *ſoals*, and if you go much in them the Leather weareth out, and in a little time a mans foot cometh to the ground, but now a man that goeth bare-foot all his days, the skin of his feet doth not wear out, why ſhould not the *ſoal* of his *foot*, ſooner wear out, then the ſoul of his *ſhooe*, for the Leather is much thicker then the Skin? the reaſon is, becauſe there is life in the one, and not in the other, there is life in the skin of the foot, and therefore that *holdeth out*, and groweth *thicker and thicker*, *harder and harder*, but there is no life in the ſoal of his ſhooe, and therefore that *weareth out*, and waxeth *thinner and thinner*, ſo it is with gifts and grace.

Now then, if I decay and abate and grow weary of a profeſſion, and fall away at laſt, if I *begin in the ſpirit and end in the fleſh*, then was all

I did from a *natural conſcience*; but if I grow and hold out, if I *perſevere to the end*, and my *laſt works be more then my firſt*, then do I act from a *renewed conſcience.*

And thus I have in ſeven things anſwered that queſtion, *viz.* if conſcience may go thus far in putting a man upon duties, then what difference is there between this natural conſcience in Hypocrites and ſinners, and renewed conſcience in beleivers.

And that is the firſt anſwer to the main query, *viz. whence is it that many men go ſo far as that they come to be almoſt Chriſtians.*

It is to anſwer the call of conſcience.

Secondly, *It is from the power of the word under which they live*, though the word doth not work effectually upon all, yet it hath a great power upon the hearts of ſinners, to reforme them; though not to renew them.

1. It hath *vim diſcriminationis*, a diſcerning, diſcovering power, *Heb.* 4. 12. *the Word of God is quick and power-*

powerful, ſharper then any two-edged Sword, peircing to the dividing aſſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

This is the glaſs where every man may ſee what manner of man he is, Iam. 1. 23 as the light of the Sun diſcovers the little Moths, ſo the light of the Word ſhining into conſcience, diſcovers little ſins.

2. The Word hath *vim legiſlativam*, the power of a law, it gives law to the whole ſoul, binds conſcience, it is therefore frequently call'd the law, Pſa. 119 92. in Scripture, *unleſs thy law had been my delight*, &c. Iſa. 8. 20. *To the law and to the teſtimony*, this is ſpoken of the whole Word of God, which is therefore called a Law, becauſe of its binding power upon the conſcience.

3. It hath *vim judicativam*, a judging power, *John* 12. 48. *The word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him at the laſt day*, the ſentence that God will paſs upon ſinners hereafter, is no other then what the word paſſeth upon them here, the judgement of

God, is not a day wherein God will paſs any new ſentence, but it is ſuch a day wherein God will make a ſolemn publique ratification of the judgement paſſed by the Miniſtry of the word upon ſouls here; this I gather clearly from *Mat.* 18. 18. *whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven, and whatever ye ſhall looſe an earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven*, ſo that by bringing a mans heart to the word, and trying it by that, he may quickly know what that ſentence is that God will paſs upon his ſoul in the laſt day; for as the judgment of the word is now, ſuch will the judgement of God be, concerning him in the laſt day.

Indeed there is a twofold power, further then this, in the word,

It hath { *Vim plaſticam*
Et vim ſalvificam,

A begetting and ſaving power, but this is put forth onely upon ſome.

But the other is more extenſive, and hath a great cauſality upon a profeſſion of godlineſs, even among them that have no grace.

A man that is under this threefold power, of diſcerning, law and judgement, that hath his heart *ranſacked* and *diſcovered*, his conſcience *bound* and *awed*, his ſtate and ſinful condition *judged* and *condemned*, may take up reſolution of a new life, and convert himſelf to a great profeſſion of Religion.

Thirdly, *A man may go far in this courſe of profeſſion, from affectation of applauſe and credit, and to get a name in the World*, as it is ſaid of the Phariſes, *they love to pray in the Market places, and in the corners of the ſtreets, to be ſeen of men.* Mat.6.5.

Many are of *Machiavels* principle, that the appearance of virtue is to be ſought, becauſe though the uſe of it is a trouble, yet the credit of it is a help.

Jerom in his Epiſtle to *Julian*, calls ſuch *popularis auræ vilia mancipia*, the baſe bond-ſlaves of common fame. Many a man doth that for credit, that he will not do for conſcience, and owns Religion more for the ſake of a luſt, then for the ſake of Chriſt, thus making *Gods ſtream*, to turne the *Devils mill.*

Fourthly, *It is from a deſire of ſalvation*, there is in all men a deſire of ſalvation, it is natural to every being, to love and ſeek its own preſervation, *who will ſhew us any good?* Pſal. 4. 6.

This is the language of nature ſeeking happineſs to its ſelf.

Many a man may be carryed ſo far out in the deſires of ſalvation, as to do many things to obtain it.

So did the young man, *good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* he went far and did much, obeyed many commands, and all out of a deſire of ſalvation: ſo then put theſe together, and there is an anſwer to that Queſtion. Mat. 19. 16.

The call of conſcience,
The power of the word,
The affectation of credit, and
The deſire of ſalvation.

Theſe may carry a man ſo far as to be *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

The third Queſtion propounded is this.

Queſt. Third, *Whence is it that many are but almoſt Chriſtians, when they have gone thus far? what is the cauſe of this.*

Anſw. I might multiply anſwers to this queſtion, but I ſhall inſtance in two onely, which I judge the moſt material.

First, *It is for want of right and ſound convictions*, if a man be not throughly convinced of ſin, and his heart truely broken, whatever his profeſſion of godlineſs may be, yet he will be ſure to miſcarry; every work of conviction is not a through work; There are convictions that are onely *natural and rational*, but not from the powerful work of the ſpirit of God.

Rational conviction on what? Rational conviction, *is that which proceeds from the working of a natural conſcience, charging guilt from the light of nature, by the help of thoſe κοίναι ἔννοιαι thoſe common principles of reaſon that*

that are in all men; This is the conviction you read of, *Rom.* 2. 14, 15. It is ſaid that the Gentiles who had not the law, yet had *their conſciences bearing witneſs, and accuſing or excuſing one another*; though they had not the *light of Scripture*, yet they had convictions from the *light of nature*; now by the help of the Goſpel light, theſe convictions may be much improved, and yet the heart not renewed.

Spiritual convictio on what?

But then there is a ſpiritual conviction, and this is *that work of the ſpirit of God, upon the ſinners heart by the word, whereby the guilt and filth of ſin is fully diſcovered, and the wo and miſery of a natural ſtate diſtinctly ſet home upon the conſcience, to the dread and terrour of the ſinner, whilſt he abides in that ſtate and condition.*

And this is the conviction that is a ſound and through work; many have their convictions, but not this *ſpiritual conviction*.

Quere

Now you'l ſay *ſuppoſe I am at any time under conviction, how ſhall I know whither my conviction be onely from a* *natural conſcience, or whether they be from the ſpirit of God?*

Anſw. I ſhould digreſs too much to draw out the ſolution of this queſtion, to its juſt length, I ſhall therefore in five things onely lay down, the moſt conſiderable difference between the one and the other.

1. *Natural convictions reach cheifly to open and ſcandalous ſins*, ſins againſt the light of nature, for *natural conviction* can reach no farther then *natural light*.

But *Spiritual conviction*, reaches to *ſecret, inward, and undiſcerned* ſins, ſuch as *Hypocriſie, Formality, Lukewarmneſs, deadneſs and hardneſs of heart*, &c.

Obſerve then, whether your trouble for ſin, looks *inward* as well as *outward*, and reaches not onely to *open ſins*, but to *ſecret luſts*, to *inward and ſpiritual ſins*, and if ſo, this is a ſure ſign of the work of the ſpirit, becauſe the trouble occaſioned by theſe ſins bears a more immediate relation to the Holineſs of God, who onely is offended by them, they being ſuch as none elſe can ſee or know.

2. *Natural convictions deal onely with a mans converſation*, not with his ſtate and condition, with ſins *actual*, not *original*; But *ſpiritual convictions*, reach to all ſins, to ſins of heart as well as ſins of life, to the ſin of our *nature*, as well as the ſins of *practiſe*; to the ſin that is *born in us*, as well as the ſin that is *done by us*.

Where the ſpirit of the Lord commeth to work effectually in any ſoul, he holdeth the glaſs of the law before the ſinners eyes, and openeth his eyes to look into the glaſs, and to ſee all that deformity and filthineſs that is in his heart and nature.

The Apoſtle *Paul* ſaith, *I had not known ſin, but by the Law, Rom. 7. 7.* How can this be true? that he had not known ſin but by the law, when as the light of nature diſcovers ſin? It is ſaid of the *Gentiles*, *That having not the law, they are a law unto themſelves.* Ro. 2. 14.

This ſin therefore that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, is not to be underſtood of ſin *actual*, but of ſin *original*; I had not known the pollution of nature,

that

that *fountain* of ſin that is within, this I had not known but by the law, and indeed this is a diſcovery that natural light cannot make; it is true the *Philoſopher* could ſay Πάντων μὲν πρώτιστα κακῶν ἐπιθυμία ἐστὶ, that luſt is the firſt and cheif of all ſins; but I cannot think he meant it of original ſin, but of the *inordinacy of appetite, and deſire* at moſt; for I find that the wiſeſt of the *Philoſophers* underſtood nothing of *original* ſin, hear *Seneca, Erras ſi tecum vitia naſci putas, ſupervenerunt, ingeſta ſunt*; ſin is not born with thee but brought in ſince. *Tam ſine vitio quam ſine virtute naſcimur.*

Timon apud Laertium.

Quintilian ſaith, it is more marvel that any one man ſins, then that all men ſhould live honeſtly, ſin is ſo againſt the nature of men; how blind were they in this point, and ſo was *Paul*, till the ſpirit of the Lord diſcovered it to him by the word. And indeed this is a diſcovery proper to the ſpirit.

It is he that makes the ſinner ſee all the deformity and filthineſs that is within, it is he that pulleth off all the ſinners rags, and makes him ſee his naked and wretched condition, it is he that ſhews us the *blindneſs* of the mind, the *ſtubborneſs* of the will, the *diſorderedneſs* of the affections, the *ſearedneſs* of the conſcience, the *plague* of our hearts, and the *ſin* of our natures, and therein the *deſperateneſs* of our ſtate.

3. *Natural convictions carry the Soul out to look more on the evil that comes by ſin, then on the evil that is in ſin*; ſo that the ſoul under this conviction is more troubled at the dread of Hell and wrath, and damnation, then at the vileneſs and heinous nature of ſin.

But now *Spiritual convictions*, work the ſoul into a greater ſenſibleneſs of the evil that is in ſin, then of the evil that comes by ſin, the *diſhonour* done to God by walking contrary to his will, the *wounds* that are made in the heart of Chriſt, the greif that the holy Spirit of God is put to, this wounds the ſoul more then a thouſand Hells.

4. *Natural convictions are not durable, they are quickly worn out*, they

are like a *ſlight cut* in the skin, that bleeds a little, and is ſoar for the preſent, but is healed again, and in a few days not ſo much as a Scar to be ſeen.

But *Spiritual convictions* are durable, they cannot be worn out, they abide in the ſoul till they have reached their end (which is the change of the ſinner)

The *convictions* of the ſpirit are like a *deep wound* in the fleſh, that goes to the bone, and ſeems to indanger the life of the Patient, and is not healed but with great skill; and when it is healed, leaves a Scar behinde it, that when the Patient is well, yet he can ſay, here is the mark of my wound, which will never wear out.

Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit.

So a ſoul that is under *Spiritual conviction*, his wound is deep, and not to be healed, but by the great skill of the Heavenly Phyſitian, and when it is healed, there are the tokens of it remaining in the ſoul that can never be worn out, ſo that the ſoul may ſay here are the markes and ſignes of my conviction ſtill in my ſoul.

5. ***Natural convictions make the Soul ſhy of God***, guilt works fear, and fear cauſes eſtrangedneſs; thus it was with *Adam*, when he ſaw his nakedneſs, he ran away and *hid himſelf* from God. Gen. 3.8.

Now ſpiritual convictions drive not the ſoul from God, but unto God; *Ephraims* conviction was ſpiritual, and he runs to God, *Turn thou me, and I ſhall be turned.* So that there is you ſee, a great difference between *conviction* and *conviction*, between that which is *natural*, and that which is *ſpiritual*, that which is *Common*, and that which is *Saving*. Jer.31.18

Yea ſuch is the difference, that though a man hath never ſo much of the former, yet if he be without the latter, he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, and therefore we have great reaſon to inquire more after this ſpiritual conviction. For,

1. ***Spiritual conviction is an eſſential part of ſound converſion***, *converſion* begins here, *true converſion* begins in *convictions*, and *true convictions* end in *converſion*.

Till the ſinner be convinced of ſin, he can never be converted from ſin, Chriſts coming was as a Saviour, to dye for ſinners, and the ſpirits comming is to convince us as ſinners, that we may cloſe with Chriſt as a Saviour; till ſin be throughly *diſcovered to us*, intereſt in the blood of Chriſt, cannot rightly be *claimed by us*, nay ſo long as ſin is *unſeen*, Chriſt will be *unſought*. *They that be whole needs not the Phyſitian, but they that are ſick.* Mat. 9. 12.

2. *Slight and common convictions*, (when they are but skin deep) *are the cauſe of much Hypocriſie*; *Slight convictions* may bring the ſoul to *clasp about* Chriſt, but not to *cloſe with* Chriſt, and this is the guiſe of a Hypocrite; I know no other riſe and ſpring of Hypocriſie like this of ſlight convictions, this hath filled the Church of Chriſt with Hypocrites.

Nay it is not onely the ſpring of *Hypocriſie*, but it is alſo the ſpring of *Apoſtacy*, what was the cauſe that *the Seed was ſaid to Wither away*, Mat. 13. 5, 6, is was becauſe *it had* Mat. 13. 5, 6.

no deepneſs of earth. Where there is a through conviction, there is a *depth of earth* in the heart, and there the *Seed of the Word* grows, but where convictions are ſlight and common, there the ſeed withers for want of depth, ſo that you ſee clearly in this one inſtance, whence it is, that many are but *almoſt Chriſtians*, when they have gone ſo far in Religion, *viz.* for want of ſound convictions.

Secondly, (And this hath a neer Relation to the former) *It is for want of a throughwork of grace firſt wrought in the heart*, where this is not, all a mans following profeſſion comes to nothing; that *Scholar* is never like to read well, that will needs be in his *Grammer*, before he is out of his *Primmer*; *Cloath* that is not wrought well in the Loom, will neither *wear well*, nor *wear long*, it will do little ſervice, ſo that Chriſtian that doth not come well off the Loom, that hath not a through work of grace in his heart, will never wear well, he will ſhrink in the wetting, and never do much ſervice for God; it is not the

Mat. 13. 20, 21.

the pruning of a bad tree, will make it *bring forth good fruit*, but *the tree muſt be made good*, before the *fruit* can be *good*, Mat. 12. 33.

He that takes up a profeſſion of Religion with an unbroken heart, will never ſerve Chriſt in that profeſſion with his whole heart.

If there be not a true change in that mans heart, that yet goes far and doth much in the ways of God, to be ſure he will either dye an Hypocrite or an Apoſtate.

Look as in nature, if a man be not well born but prove *crooked* or *miſhapen* in the birth, why he will be *crooked* as long as he lives, you may boulſter or ſtuff out his clothes to conceal it, but the *crookedneſs*, the *deformity* remains ſtill, you may *hide it*, but you cannot *help it*, it may be *covered*, but it cannot be *cured*.

So it is in this caſe, if a man come into a profeſſion of Religion, but be not right born, if he be not *begotten of God*, and *born of the Spirit*, if there be not a through work of grace in his heart, all his profeſſion of Religion

John 3.5.

ligion will never mend him, he may be boulſterd out by a life of duties, but he will be but a *Hypocrite at laſt*, for want of a *through work at firſt*, a forme of godlineſs may *cover* his crookedneſs, but will never *cure* it.

A man can never be a true Chriſtian nor accepted of God though in the higheſt profeſſion of Religion, without a work of grace in the heart. For,

1. *There muſt be an anſwerableneſs in the frame of that mans heart (that would be accepted of God) to the duties done by him*, his ſpirit and affections within muſt carry a proportion to his profeſſion without; *Prayer* without *faith*, obedience to the *law given*, without fear and holy reverence of the *Lawgiver*, God abhors: acts of *internal* worſhip, muſt anſwer the duties of *external* worſhip.

Now where there is not grace wrought in the heart, there can never be any proportion or anſwerableneſs in the frame of that mans heart, to the duties done by him.

2. *Thoſe duties that find acceptance with*

with God, muſt be done in ſincerity, God doth not take our duties by tale, nor judge of us *according* to the *frequency of our performances*, but according to the ſincerity of our hearts in the performance. It is this that commends both the doer and the duty to God; *with ſincerity*, God accepts the leaſt we do, *without* ſincerity God rejects the moſt we do or can do; This is that temper of ſpirit which God highly delights in, *Prov.* 11. 20. *They that are of a froward heart, are* 1 Chron. 29 17. *an abomination to the Lord, but ſuch as are upright in their way are his delight.*

The Apoſtle gives it a great Epithete, he calls it in 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. εἰλικρινείᾳ Θεοῦ, *the ſincerity of God*, that is We read it Godly ſincerity. ſuch a ſincerity as is his ſpecial work upon the ſoul, ſetting the heart *right* and *upright* before him in all his ways.

This is the *Crown* of all our graces, and the *commendation* of all our duties, thouſands periſh and go to Hell in the midſt of all *their performances* and *duties*, meerly for want of a little *ſincerity* of heart to God.

Now where there is not a change of ſtate, a work of grace in the heart, there can be no ſincerity to God-ward, for this is not *quid proveniens a natura*, it is not an herb that grows in natures garden, the heart of man is naturally *deceitful*, and *deſperately wicked*, more oppoſite to ſincerity then to any thing: as things corrupted carry a greater diſſimilitude to what they were, then to any thing elſe which they never were; Jer. 17.9.

God made man upright, now man voluntarily loſing this, is become more diſlike to himſelf then to any thing below himſelf, he is more like a *Lyon*, a *Wolf*, a *Bear*, a *Serpent*, a *Toad*, then to man in innocency.

So that it is impoſſible to find *ſincerity* in any ſoul, till there be a work of grace wrought there by the ſpirit of God; and hence it is that a man is but almoſt a Chriſtian when he hath done all.

The fourth Queſtion.

4. *What is the reaſon that many go no farther in the profeſſion of Religion,*

then to be almoſt Chriſtians ?

Reaſ. 1. 1. *It is becauſe they deceive themſelves in the truth of their own condition*, they miſtake their ſtate, and think it *good and ſafe*, when it is *bad and dangerous*; A man may look upon himſelf as a member of Chriſt, and yet God may look upon him as a Veſſel of wrath; as a Child of God, by looking more upon his *ſins* then his graces, more upon his *failings* then his *faith*, more upon *in dwelling luſts* then *renewing grace*, may think his caſe very bad, when yet it is very good; *I am black*, ſaith the Spouſe, *Cant.* 1. 5. and yet ſaith Chriſt, *O thou faireſt among Women.* v. 8. So the ſinner by looking more upon his *duties* then his *ſins*, may think he ſees his *name written in the book of life*, and yet be in the accoumt of God a very reprobate.

There is nothing more common then for a man to *think himſelf ſomething, when he is nothing*, and ſo *he deceives himſelf*, many a man bleſſes himſelf in his intereſt in Chriſt, when he is indeed a ſtranger to him, many a man Gal. 6. 3.

a man thinks his ſin pardoned when alas he is ſtill in *the Gall of bitterneſs and bond of liniquity.* Many a man thinks he hath Grace when he hath none *there is* (ſaith Salomon) *that makes himſelf rich, and yet hath nothing*; This was the very temper of *Laodicea, Thou ſayſt I am rich and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing, and knoweſt not* (pray mind that) *that thou art wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind and naked.* Act 8.23. Prov.13. 7. Rev.3.17

Thou knowſt not] as *bad* as ſhe was, ſhe thought her ſtate *good*, as poor as ſhe was in grace, ſhe thought ſhe was *rich*; as *miſerable and naked* as ſhe was, yet ſhe thought ſhe had *need of nothing.*

Now there are ſeveral riſes or grounds of this miſtake.

I'le name five to you.

Firſt, *The deſperate deceitfulneſs of the heart of every natural man*, Jer. 17. 9. *the heart is deceitful above all things*, the *Hebrew* is עקב הלב מכל the word (עקב) is the ſame with *Jacob's* name, now you know he was a *ſupplanter* of his Brother *Eſau*, *he is right-* *Supplantativum cor præ omni.* Gen.27. 36.

ly called Jacob (ſaith he) *for he hath ſupplanted me theſe two times.*

So the word ſignifies to be *fraudulent*, *ſubtile*, *deceitful and ſupplanting.* Thus is the heart of every natural man, עקב מכל *deceitful above all things.*

Pſ.52.4. Ye read of the *deceitfulneſs of the tongue.*

Mat.13.22. And of the *deceitfulneſs of riches.*

Prov.31.30. And of the *deceitfulneſs of beauty.*

Job 6.15. And of the *deceitfulneſs of friends.*

But yet the heart is deceitful above them all, nay you read *of the deceit-*
Rev.20.3 *fulneſs of Satan*, yet truely a mans heart is a greater deceiver then he, for he could never deceive a man, if his own heart did not deceive him.

Now it is from hence that a man preſumes upon the goodneſs of his caſe, from the deſperate treachery of his own heart.

How common is it for men to boaſt of the goodneſs of their hearts, I thank God, though I do not make ſuch a ſhew and pretence as ſome do, yet I have as
Prov.28.26. *good a heart as the beſt.* Oh do but hear *Salomon* in this caſe, *He that truſteth in*

in his own heart is a fool: will any wiſe man commit his money to a Cutpurſe? will he truſt a Cheat? It is a good rule, μέμνησο ἀπιστεῖν, remember to diſtruſt, and it was *Auſtins* prayer, *domine libera me a meipſo.* That man that truſts to his own heart, ſhall be ſure to find himſelf deceived at laſt.

Secondly, *This miſtake ariſes from the pride of a mans ſpirit*; there is a proud heart in every natural man, there was much of this pride in *Adams* ſin, and there is much of it in all *Adams ſons*, it is a radical ſin, and from hence ariſes this overweening opinion of a mans ſtate and condition, *Salomon* ſaith, *be not righteous overmuch*, *Auſtin* ſpeaking occaſionally of thoſe words, ſaith, it is not *juſtitia ſapientis*, but *ſuperbia præſumentis*, not meant of the righteouſneſs of the wiſe man, but of the pride of the preſumptuous man. Now in this ſenſe every carnal man is *righteous overmuch*, though he hath none of that *righteouſneſs* which commends him to God (*viz.* the righteouſneſs of Chriſt) yet he hath too much of that *righte-*

Eccleſ. 7. 16.

Aug. ſerm. 365.

ouſneſs, which commends him to *himſelf*, and that is *ſelf-righteouſneſs.*

A proud man hath an eye to ſee his *beauty*, but not his *deformity*, his *parts* but not his *ſpots*, his *ſeeming righteouſneſs*, but not his *real wretchedneſs.*

It muſt be a work of grace that muſt ſhew a man the want of grace. The haughty eye looks upward, but the humble eye looks *downward*, and therefore this is the beleivers Motto, Epheſ.3.8 1 Tim.1. 15. *the leaſt of Saints, the greateſt of ſinners*, but the carnal mans Motto is, Lu.18.11 *I thank God I am not as other men.*

Thirdly, *Many deceive themſelves, with common grace inſtead of ſaving, through that reſemblance that is between them*; as many take counterfeit money for current coyn, ſo do too many take common grace for true, *in ſimilibus facilis eſt deceptio. Saul* took the 1Sam.21. 14. Devil for *Samuel*, becauſe he appeared in the mantle of *Samuel*; ſo many take common grace for ſaving, becauſe it is like ſaving grace; a man may be under a *ſupernatural* work, and yet fall ſhort of a *ſaving work*, the firſt raiſeth Nature, the ſecond onely reneweth Nature; though every *ſaving* work of the ſpirit be *ſupernatural*, yet every *ſupernatural* work of the ſpirit is not *ſaving*, and hence many deceive their own ſouls, by taking a *ſupernatural* work for a *ſaving work*.

Fourthly, *Many miſtake a profeſſion of Religion, for a work of converſion, and an outſide reformation, for a ſure ſign of inward Regeneration.* If the outſide of the Cup be waſhed, then they think all is clean though it be never ſo *foul* within. This is the common rock that ſo many ſouls ſplit upon, to their eternal hazard, taking up a forme of *godlinſs, but denying the power thereof.* 2 Tim. 3. 5.

Fifthly, *Want of a home application of the law of God, to the heart and conſcience to diſcover to a man the true ſtate and condition he is in.*

Where this is wanting, a man will ſit down ſhort of a true work of grace, and will reckon his caſe better then it is. That is a notable paſſage, which the Apoſtle hints concerning himſelf, *Rom.* 7. 9. *I was alive without the Law once, but when the Commandment came, ſin revived and I dyed.*

Here you have an account of the different apprehenſions *Paul* had of his condition, with and without the word.

Phil. 3. 5, 6. 1. Here is his apprehenſion of his condition without the word, *I was alive* (ſaith he) *without the Law*, *Paul* had the law, for he was a *Phariſee*, Ro. 2. 20. and they had *the forme of knowledge, and of the truth of the law*, therefore when he ſaith, he was *without the law*, you muſt not take him literally, but ſpiritually, he was without the power and efficacy of it upon his heart and conſcience, convincing and awakening, and diſcovering ſin, and ſo long as this was his caſe, he doubted not of his ſtate, he was confident of the goodneſs of his condition, this he hinteth when he ſayth, *I was alive*, but then,

2. Here is his apprehenſion of his condition with the word, and that is quite contrary to what it was before, *when*

when the commandment came (ſaith he) *then ſin revived and I dyed.*

When the Word of the Lord came with power upon his ſoul, when the Spirit of God, ſet it home effectually upon his conſcience, that is meant *by the coming of the Commandment*; *then ſin revived and I dyed*; that is, I ſaw the deſperateneſs of my caſe, and the filthineſs of all my ſelf righteouſneſs.

Then my hope ceaſed, and my confidence failed, and as before I thought my *ſelf alive*, and my *ſin dead*, ſo when God had awakened conſcience by the Word, then I ſaw my *ſin alive and powerful*, and my *ſelf dead and miſerable.*

So that this is the firſt reaſon why men go no farther in the profeſſion of Religion, then to be *almoſt Chriſtians.*

It is becauſe they miſtake their ſtate, and think it good, when it is not, which miſtake hath a fivefold riſe.

A deceitful heart.

A proud ſpirit.

Taking common grace, for ſaving.

Outward reformation, for true Regeneration.

Want of a home application of the Law of God to the heart and conſcience.

Reaſ. 2. 2. *It is from Satans cunning, who if he cannot keep ſinners in their open prophaneſs, then he labours to perſwade them to take up with a forme of godlineſs*; if he cannot entice them on in their luſts with a total *neglect of Heaven*, then he entices them to ſuch a profeſſion as is ſure to fall *ſhort of Heaven.* He will conſent to the leaving ſome ſin, ſo as we do but keep the reſt; and to the doing ſome duties, ſo as we negleſt the reſt: nay rather then part with his intereſt in the ſoul, he will yeild far to our profeſſion of Religion, and conſent to any thing but our converſion and cloſing with Chriſt for ſalvation, he cares not which way we come to Hell, ſo as he gets us but thither at laſt.

Reaſ. 3. 3. *It is from Worldly and carnal policy*, this is a great hinderance to many, policy many times enters Caveats againſt piety, *Jehu* will not part with his *calves*, leſt he hazards his *Kingdom*.

Among many men there would be more zeal and honeſty, were there leſs deſign and policy. There is an *honeſt policy* that helps Religion, but *carnal policy* hinders it.

We are commanded *to be wiſe as Serpents*, now the *Serpent is the ſubtilliſt of creatures*, but then we muſt *be innocent as Doves*, if *piety* be without *policy*, it wants *ſecurity*, if *policy* be without *piety*, it wants *integrity*; *piety without policy*, *is too ſimple to be ſafe, and policy without piety*, *is too ſubtile to be good*. Mat. 10. 16. Gen. 3, 1.

Let men be as *Wiſe*, as *Prudent*, as *Subtile*, as *Watchful* as they will, but then let it be in the way of God, let it be joyned with *holineſs and integrity*.

That is a curſed wiſedom, that forbids a man to launch any farther out in the depth of Religion then he can ſee the land, leſt he be taken in a ſtorm before he can make ſafe to ſhoar again.

Reaſ. 4. 4. *There is ſome luſt eſpouſed in the heart, that hinders a hearty cloſe with Chriſt*,

Chriſt, though they bid fair yet they come not to Gods terms, the *young man would have eternal life*, and he bids fair for it, a willing obedience to every command but one; but onely one, and will not God abate him one? is he ſo ſevere? will he not come down a little in his terms, when man riſes ſo high? muſt man yeild all? will God yeild nothing?

Mat. 19. 20.

No, my brethren, he that underbids for Heaven, ſhall as ſurely loſe it, as he that will give nothing for it; he that will not give all he hath, *part with all for the pearl of price*, ſhall as ſurely go without it, as he that never once cheapens it.

Mat. 13. 45, 46.

The not comming up to Gods terms, is the ruine of thouſands of ſouls, nay it is that upon which all that periſh, do periſh; a *naked* ſinner, to a *naked* Chriſt, a *bleeding broken* ſinner, to a *bleeding broken Chriſt*, theſe are Gods terms.

Moſt profeſſors are like Iron between two equal loadſtones, God draws, and they propend towards God, and the World draws, and they incline to the World; they are between both, they would not leave God for the world, if they might not be ingaged to leave the world for God.

But if they muſt part with all, with every luſt, every Darling, every beloved ſin, why then the ſpirit of *Demas* poſſeſſes them, and God is forſaken by them. 2 Tim. 4. 10.

My brethren, this is the great reaſon why many that are come to be *almoſt Chriſtians*, go no farther; ſome one beloved luſt or other hinders them, and after a long and high profeſſion, parts Chriſt and them forever; they *did run well*, but here it is that they give out, and after all fall ſhort and periſh to eternity. Gal. 5.7.

Thus having anſwered theſe four Queſtions, *viz.*

1. *How far a man may go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

2. *Whence it is that a man goeth ſo far as to be almoſt a Chriſtian.*

3. *Whence it is that a man is but almoſt a Chriſtian, when he hath gone thus far.*

4. *What is the reaſon men go no farther in Religion then to be almoſt Chriſtians:*

I proceed now to the *Application.*

Infer. 1. 1. *That ſalvation is not ſo eaſie a thing as it is imagined to be*, this is atteſted by our Lord Chriſt himſelf, *Mat.* 7. 14. *Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.* The *gate* of *converſion* is a very *ſtrait gate*, and yet every man that would be ſaved eternally muſt enter in at this *ſtrait gate*; for ſalvation is impoſſible without it,

Joh. 3. 3. *except a man be born again* (ἄνωθεν, *born from above*) *he cannot ſee the Kingdom of God.*

Not that this gate is ſtrait ſimply and in reſpect of it ſelf; no, for converting grace is free, the gate of mercy ſtands open all the day long; in the tenders of Goſpel grace, none are

Mat. 22. 3, 5. Act. 13. 46. excluded, unleſs they exclude themſelves, Chriſt doth not ſay, if ſuch and ſuch, will come to me, I will not caſt them out, but *him that cometh*

Joh. 6. 37 *unto me*, (be he who, or what he will, if he hath a heart to cloſe with me) me) *I will in no wiſe caſt him out*, he ſaith not if this or that man will, here is water of life for him, but *if any man will, let him take the water of life freely*, Chriſt grudgeth mercy to none, though ſalvation was *dearly purchaſed* for us, yet it is *freely proffered* to us. Rev.22. 17.

So that *the gate which leadeth to life* is not *ſtrait* on Chriſts part, or in reſpect of its ſelf, but it is *ſtrait* in reſpect of us, becauſe of our luſts and corruptions, which make the entrance difficult, a *needles eye* is big enough for a thread to paſs through, but it is a ſtraight paſſage for a Cable rope, either the *needles eye* muſt be inlarged, or the *Cable rope* muſt be untwiſted, or the entrance is impoſſible. So it is in this caſe, the gate of converſion is a very ſtraight paſſage, for a carnal corrupt ſinner to go in at; the ſoul can never paſs through with any one luſt beloved and eſpouſed, and therefore the ſinner muſt be unwiſted from every luſt, he muſt lay aſide the love of every ſin, or he can never enter in at this gate, for it is a *ſtraight gate.*

And when he is in at this ſtraight *gate*, he meeteth with a *narrow way* to walk in, ſo our Lord Chriſt ſaith, *narrow is the way that leadeth to life*, and what way is this but the *way of* Heb. 12. 14. *ſanctification*? for *without holineſs no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord.*

Now this way of *Sanctification* is a very *narrow way*, for it lies over the neck of every luſt, and in the exerciſe of every grace, ſubduing the one, and improving the other; dying daily, and yet living dayly, dying to ſin and living to God, this is the way of *Sanctification*; And oh how few are there who walk in this way, the broad way hath many Travellers in it, but this narrow way is like the ways of *Canaan* in the days of *Shamgar*, it is ſaid *Judges* 5.6. *In the days of* Shamgar *the Son of* Anath, *the high-ways were unoccupied, and the Travellors walked through by-ways*, in the *Hebrew* it is אורחות עקלקלות *through crooked ways*, the way of holineſs is by the moſt an unoccupied way, ſo ſaith the Prophet, *Iſa.* 35.8,9.

A

A way ſhall be there, and it ſhall be called the way of holineſs, the unclean ſhall not paſs over it, no Lyon ſhall be there, nor any ravenous beaſt ſhall go up thereon, but the redeemed ſhall walk there; the *unclean*, and the *lyon*, and the *ravenous beaſt*, they are in the *crooked ways*, none but the redeemed of the Lord, walk in the way of the Lord.

It is no wonder then, that our Lord Chriſt ſaith of *life* that *few there be who find it*; when as the *gate* is *ſtrait* and the *way narrow* that leadeth to it; many pretend to walk in the *narrow way*, but they never entred in at the *ſtrait gate*, and many pretend to have entered in at the *ſtrait gate*, but they walk not in the *narrow way*.

Ad Cæleſti regnum pauce deducuntur.

It is a very common thing for a man to periſh, upon a miſtake of his way, to go on in thoſe paths that take hold of Hell, and yet hope to find Heaven at laſt; thoſe twenty paths forementioned run into deſtruction, and yet many chuſe them, and walk in them as the way of ſalvation. As many prophane and open

P ſinners

ſinners periſh by chuſing *the way of death*; ſo many formal profeſſors periſh by *miſtaking the way of life*; this I gather from that our Lord Chriſt ſaith, *few there be that find it*, which doth clearly imply, what in *Luk.* 13. 24. he doth plainly expreſs, viz. that many ſeek it, *many ſeek to enter in and yet are not able*; many *run far*, and yet do not *ſo run* as to obtain; many bid fair for the *pearl of price*, and yet go without it, hell is had with eaſe, but *the Kingdom of Heaven ſuffers violence*, Mat. 11. 12.

1 Cor. 9. 24.

Facilis diſcenſus Averni, ſed revocare gradum, ſuperaſq; evadere ad auras. Hic labor hoc opus eſt,

Infer. 2. 2. *If many go thus far in the way to Heaven, and yet miſcarry; Oh then what ſhall be the end of them who fall ſhort of theſe!* if he ſhall periſh who is *almoſt a chriſtian*, what ſhall he do who is not *at all a Chriſtian?* if he that owneth Chriſt, and profeſſeth Chriſt, and leaveth many ſins for Chriſt, may be damned notwithſtanding, what then ſhall his doom be who diſowneth Chriſt, and refuſeth to part with one ſin, one luſt, one Oath for Chriſt, nay that openly blaſphemeth the precious name of Chriſt? if he that is *out-*

outwardly ſanctified, ſhall yet be eternally rejected, what will the caſe be of ſuch as are *openly unſanctified*, that have not onely the *plague* of a hard heart within, but alſo the *plague ſores* of a prophane life without? if the *formal profeſſour* muſt be ſhut out, ſurely then the *filthy adulterer*, the *ſwiniſh drunkard*, the *cheap ſwearer*, the *prophane ſabbath-breaker*, the *foul-mouth'd ſcoffer*, yea and every carnal ſinner much more; if there be a *wo* to him that falleth ſhort of Heaven, then how ſad is the *wo* to him who falleth ſhort of them that fall ſhort of Heaven? ah that God would make this an awakening word to ſinners that are aſleep in ſin, without the leaſt fear of death or dread of damnation!

Uſe of Examin.

Are there many in the World that are almoſt and yet but almoſt Chriſtians? why *then it is time for us to call our own condition into queſtion, and to make a more narrow ſcrutiny into the truth of our ſpiritual eſtate*; what it is, whether it be right or no? whether we are ſound and ſincere, in our profeſſion of religion or no? When our

Lord Chriſt told his Diſciples one of you ſhall betray me every one began preſently to reflect upon himſelf, *Maſter is it I? Maſter is it I?* So ſhould we do, when the Lord diſcovers to us from his word, how many there are under the profeſſion of Religion that are but almoſt Chriſtians, we ſhould ſtrait way reflect upon cur hearts, Lord *is it I?* is my heart unſound? am I but almoſt a Chriſtian? am I one of them that ſhall miſcarry at laſt? am I a Hypocrite under a profeſſion of Religion? have I a forme of Godlineſs without the power?

There are two queſtions of very great importance which we ſhould every one of us often put to our ſelves.

What am I?

Where am I?

1. *What am I?* am I a child of God or not? am I ſincere in Religion, or am I onely a Hypocrite under a profeſſion?

2. *Where am I?* am I yet in a natural ſtate, or in a ſtate of grace? am I yet in the old root, in old *Adam*,

or am I in the root Chriſt Jeſus? am I in the *Covenant of works*, that miniſters onely wrath and death? or am I in the *Covenant of grace*, that miniſters life and peace? Indeed this is the firſt thing a man ſhould look at, there muſt be a change of ſtate, before there can be a change of heart, we muſt come under a change of Covenant, before we can be under a change of condition: For the *new heart*, and the *new ſpirit* is promiſed in the *new Covenant*, there is nothing of that to be heard of in the *old*; now a man muſt be under the *new Covenant*, before he can receive the bleſſing promiſed in the *new Covenant*; he muſt be in a *new Covenant ſtate*, before he can receive a *new covenant heart*; no mercy, no pardon, no change, no converſion, no grace diſpenced out of Covenant: Therefore this ſhould be our great inquiry? for if we know not where we are, we cannot know what we are, and if we know not what we are, we cannot be what we ſhould be, *viz. altogether Chriſtians.*

Ezek. 36. 26.

Let me then I beſeech you preſs this duty upon you that are profeſſors, try your own hearts, *examine your* 2 Cor. 13. 5. *ſelves whether you are in the faith; prove your own ſelves*;

I urge this upon moſt *cogent* Arguments.

1. *Becauſe many reſt in a notion of godlineſs, and outward ſhews of Religion, and yet remain in their natural condition*; many are *hearers of the Word*, Jam. 1. 22 but not *doers of it*, and ſo *deceive their own ſouls*; ſome neither *hear* nor *do*, theſe are *prophane ſinners*; ſome both *hear* and *do*, theſe are *true beleivers*; ſome *hear* but they do not *do*, theſe are *hypocritical profeſſors*.

He that ſlights the ordinances cannot be a true Chriſtian, but yet it is poſſible a man may own them and profeſs them, & yet be no true Chriſtian; who would truſt to a profeſſion that ſhall ſee *Judas* a Diſciple, an Apoſtle, a Preacher of the Goſpel, one that caſt out Devils to be caſt out himſelf? *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumciſion which is outward in the fleſh, but he is a Jew which is one inward-*

wardly, *and circumciſion is that of the heart in the ſpirit*, *and not in the letter*, *whoſe praiſe is not of men but of God.*

Ro.2.28.

2. *Becauſe errours in the firſt foundation are very dangerous*; if we be not right in the main, in the fundamental work, if the foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profeſſion comes to nothing, the houſe is built upon a ſandy foundation, and though it may ſtand for a while, yet *when the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it.*

Mat.7.27

3. *Becauſe many are the deceits that our ſouls are liable to in this caſe*; there are many things like grace, that are not grace; now it is the likeneſs and ſimilitude of things that deceives, and makes one thing be taken for another.

In ſimilibus facilis eſt deceptio.

Many take *gifts* for *grace*, *common knowledge* for *ſaving knowledge*, when as a man may have great gifts, and yet no grace, great knowledge, and yet not know Jeſus Chriſt.

Some take *common faith* for *ſaving*,

when as a man may beleive all the truths of the Goſpel, all the promiſes, all the threatnings, all the articles of the Creed to be true, and yet periſh for want of ſaving faith.

Some take *morality and reſtraining grace*, for *piety* and *renewing grace*, when as it is common to have ſin much *reſtrained*, where the heart is not at all *renewed*.

Some are deceived with a *half work*, taking *conviction* for *converſion*, *Reformation* for *Regeneration*: we have many Mermaid Chriſtians.

Deſinit in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperne.

Dan. 2. 32, 33. Or like *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, head of gold, and feet of clay; The Devil cheats moſt men by a *Synechdoche*, putting a part for the whole, partial obedience to ſome commands for univerſal obedience to all; endleſs are the deluſions that Satan faſtens upon ſouls, for want of this ſelfſearch. It is neceſſary therefore, that we try our ſtate, leaſt we take the ſhadow for the ſubſtance, and imbrace a cloud inſtead of *Juno.*

4. *Satan will try us at one time or other*; hee'l *winnow us, and ſift us* to the bottom, and if we now reſt in a *groundleſs confidence*, it will then end in a *comfortleſs deſpair.* Luk.22.31

Nay God himſelf will ſearch and try us, at the day of judgment eſpecially, and who can abide that tryal that never trys his own heart?

5. *Whatſoever a mans ſtate be, whether he be altogether a Chriſtian or no, whether his principles be ſound or no, yet it is good to examine his own heart*; if he find his heart good, his principles right and ſound, this will be matter of rejoycing, if he find his heart rotten, his principles falſe and unſound, the diſcovery is in order to a renewing; if a man have a diſeaſe upon him and know it, he may ſend to the Phyſitian in time, but what a ſad vexation will it be, not to ſee a diſeaſe till it be paſt cure; ſo for a man to be graceleſs, and not ſee it till it be too late, to think himſelf a Chriſtian when he is not, and that he is in the right way to Heaven, when Gal. 6. 4.

he is in the ready way to Hell, and yet not know it till a death-bed, or a judgement-day, confute his confidence; This is the moſt irrecoverable miſery.

Theſe are the grounds upon which I preſs this duty, of examining our ſtate: Oh that God would help us in the doing this neceſſary duty!

Queſt. You'l ſay, *But how ſhall I come to know whiter I am almaſt or altogether a Chriſtian?* if a man may go ſo far, and yet miſcarry, how ſhall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a Chriſtian indeed?

Anſw. 1. *The altogether Chriſtian cloſes with and accepts of Chriſt upon Goſpel terms*; true union makes a true Chriſtian: Many cloſe with Chriſt, but it is upon their own terms, they take him and own him, but not as God offers him. The terms upon which God in the Goſpel offers Chriſt, are, that we ſhall accept of a *broken Chriſt*, with a *broken heart*, and yet a *whole Chriſt* with the *whole heart*.

A broken Chriſt with a *broken heart*, as a witneſs of our *humility*; a *whole Chriſt* with the *whole heart*, as a witneſs of our *ſincerity*. A *broken Chriſt* reſpects his *ſuffering for ſin*, a *broken heart* reſpects our *ſence of ſin*; A *whole Chriſt* includes all his *Offices*, a *whole heart* includes all our *faculties*. Chriſt is *King*, *Prieſt* and *Prophet*, and all as *Mediator*; without any one of theſe Offices, the work of ſalvation could not have been compleated: As a *Prieſt* he *redeems* us, as a *Prophet* he *inſtructs* us, as a *King* he *ſanctifies and ſaves us*. Therefore the Apoſtle ſays, *He is made to us of God wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption*: *Righteouſneſs* and *Redemption* flow from him as a *Prieſt*; *Wiſdom* as a *Prophet*; *Sanctification* as a *King*. 1 Cor. 1. 30.

Now many imbrace Chriſt as a *Prieſt*, but yet they own him not as a *King* and *Prophet*; they like to ſhare in his *righteouſneſs*, but not to *partake of his holineſs*; they would be redeemed by him, but they would not ſubmit to him. They would be ſaved by his blood, but not ſubmit to his power. Many love the *priviledges* of the Goſpel, Lu 19.27

ſpel, but not the *duties* of the Goſpel. Now theſe are but *almoſt Chriſtians* notwithſtanding their cloſe with Chriſt; for it is upon their own terms, but not upon Gods. The Offices of Chriſt may be *diſtinguiſhed* but they can never be *divided.*

But the true Chriſtian owns Chriſt in all his Offices; he doth not only cloſe with him as *Jeſus*, but as *Lord Jeſus*; he ſays with *Thomas*, *my Lord and my God.* (Joh. 20. 28.) He doth not onely beleive in the *merit* of his *death*, but alſo conforms to the *manner* of his *life*; as he beleives in him, ſo he lives to him; he takes him for his *wiſdom*, as well as for his *righteouſneſs*; for his *Sanctification* as well as his *redemption.*

2. *The altogether Chriſtian hath a through work of Grace and Sanctification wrought in the heart, as a ſpring of duties.* Regeration is a whole change; *all old things are done away, and all things become new*: (2 Cor 5. 17.) It is a perfect work as to *parts*, though not as to *degrees.* Carnal men do duties, but they are from an unſanctified heart, and that ſpoils all. A *new peice*

of cloth never doth well *in an old garment*, for the *rent is but made worſe.* Mat. 9.16
When a mans heart is throughly renewed by grace, the mind ſavingly inlightned, the conſcience throughly convinced, the will truly humbled and ſubdued, the affections ſpiritually raiſed and ſanctified: And when Mind, and Will, and Conſcience and Affection, all joyn iſſue to help on with the performance of the duties commanded, then is a man altogether a Chriſtian.

3. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian looks to the manner as well as to the matter of his duties*; not onely *that* they be done, but *how* they be done. He knows the Chriſtians priviledges lies in *Pronounes*, but his duty in *Adverbs*; it muſt not be onely *bonum*, *good*, but it muſt be *benè*, that good muſt be right done.

Here the almoſt Chriſtian fails, he doth the ſame duties that others do for the *matter*, but he doth them not in the ſame *manner*; while he minds the *ſubſtance* he regards not the *circumſtance*: If he *pray*, he regards not Iam 5.16

faith and fervency in prayer; if he *hear* he doth not mind Chriſts rule, *Take* Luk. 8.18 *heed how ye hear*; if he *obeys*, he looks Ro. 6. 7. not to the *frame* of his *heart in obeying*, and therefore miſcarries in all he doth, *bonum oritur ex integra cauſa malum ex quolibet defectu*; any of theſe defects ſpoil the good of every duty.

4. *The altogether Chriſtian is known by his ſincerity in all his performances*; whatever a man does in the duties of the Goſpel, he cannot be a Chriſtian without ſincerity. Now the almoſt Chriſtian fails in this; for though he doth much, *prays* much, *hears* much, *obeys* much, yet he is an Hypocrite under all.

5. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian hath an anſwerableneſs within to the law without*: There is a *connaturalneſs* between the *Word* of God, and the *Will* of a Chriſtian; his heart is (as it were) the tranſcript of the Law; the ſame holineſs that is *commanded* in the Word is *implanted* in his heart; the ſame conformity to Chriſt that is enjoyned by the Word of God, is

wrought in the ſoul by the Spirit of God; the ſame obedience which the Word requireth of him, the Lord inableth to perform by his grace beſtowed on him. This is that which is promiſed in the *New Covenant*, *I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, *Jer.*31.33. Now the *writing his Law in us*, is nothing elſe but his working that grace and holineſs in us which the Law commandeth and requireth of us. Heb.9.10 & 10. 16.

In the *old Covenant Adminiſtration* God wrote his laws onely upon *tables of ſtone*, but not upon the heart, and therefore though God wrote them, yet they broke them; but in the *new Covenant Adminiſtration*, God provides new tables, *not tables of ſtone, but the fleſhly tables of the heart*, and writes his Laws there, that there might be νόμος ἔσχατος, a law within anſwerable to the law without; and this every true Chriſtian hath, ſo that he may ſay (in his meaſure) as our Lord Chriſt did, *I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart*; every beleiver hath a *light within* 2 Cor.3.3 Pſa.40.8.

within him, not guiding him to *diſpiſe and ſlight*, but to *prize* and *walk by* the light *without him*, the word *commands* him to walk *in the light*; and *the light directs* him to walk *according to the word.*

Moreover from this impreſſion of the law upon the heart, obedience and conformity to God, becomes the choice and delight of the ſoul, for holineſs is the very nature of the *new creature*, ſo that if there were *no Scripture*, *no Bible* to guide him, yet he would be holy, for he hath received *grace for grace*, there is a work *of grace within*, to anſwer to the word *of grace without.* Ioh.1.16

Now the almoſt Chriſtian is a ſtranger to this Law of God within, he may have ſome conformity to the word in *outward converſation*, but he cannot have this anſwerableneſs to the word in *inward conſtitution.*

6. *The altogether Chriſtian is much in duty, and yet much above duty*, much *in duty* in regard of *performance*, much *above duty*, in regard of *dependance*, *much in duty* by *obeying*

ing, but much *above duty* by *beleeving*. He lives in his *obedience*, but he doth not live *upon his obedience*, but upon Chriſt and his righteouſneſs.

The almoſt Chriſtian fails in this, he is much *in duty*, but not *above it*, but *reſts in it*; he works for reſt, and he reſts in his works: he cannot come to beleeve and obey too; if he beleives then he thinks there is no need of obedience, and ſo caſts off that; if he be much in obedience, then he caſts off beleiving, and thinks there is no need of that. He cannot ſay with *David*, *I have hoped for thy ſalvation, and done thy commandments.* Pſal. 119. 166.

The more a man is in duty, and the more above it; the more in doing, and more in beleiving, the more a Chriſtian.

7. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian is univerſal in his obedience*; he doth not obey one command and neglect another; do one duty and caſt off another, but he *hath reſpect to all the commands*: He endeavours to leave every ſin, and love every duty. Pſ. 119. 6.

The almoſt Chriſtian fails in this, his obedience is partial and peice-meal. If he obeys one command, he breaks another; the duties that leaſt croſs his luſt he is much in, but thoſe that do, he lays aſide.

Mat 33. 23. The *Phariſees faſted*, *prayed*, *paid tythes*, *&c.* but they did not lay aſide their covetouſneſs, their oppreſſion; they *devoured widows houſes*, Mat.23. 14. they were unnatural to parents.

8. *The altogether Chriſtian makes Gods glory the cheif end of all his performances*; if he prays, or hears, or gives, or faſts, or repents, or obeys *&c.* Gods glory is the main end of all; it is true, he may have ſomewhat elſe at hither end of his work; but God is at the further end; as *Moſes rod* ſwallowed up the *Magicians rods*, ſo Gods glory is the ultimate end that ſwallows up all his other ends. Now the almoſt Chriſtian fails in this; his ends are corrupt and ſelfiſh, God may poſſibly be at the *hither end* of his work, but ſelf is at the *further end*; for he that was never truly caſt out of himſelf, can have no higher end then himſelf.

Now then examine thy ſelf by theſe characters, put the queſtion to thy own ſoul, doſt thou cloſe with Chriſt upon Goſpel terms? is grace in the heart the principle of thy performances? doſt thou look to the manner as well as the matter of thy dutys? doſt thou do all in ſincerity, is there an anſwerableneſs within to the law without? art thou much above duty, when much in duty? is thy obedience univerſal? laſtly, is Gods glory the end of all? if ſo, then art thou not onely *almoſt*, but *altogether a Chriſtian.*

2 *Uſe of Caution.*

Oh take heed of being almoſt, and yet but almoſt a Chriſtian, it is a great complaint of God againſt *Ephraim*, that *he is a cake not turned*; that is, half baked, neither *raw* nor *roaſted*, οὔτε ψυχρὸς οὔτε ζεστὸς, neither cold nor hot, as *Laodicea* Rev. 3. 17. *because thou art neither hot nor cold, therefore I will ſpew thee out of my mouth.*

Hoſ. 7. 8.

Neq; crudus neque coctus.

This is a condition that of all others is,
- *Greatly unprofitable,*
- *Exceedingly uncomfortable,*
- *Deſperately dangerous.*

Q 2

Firſt, *It is greatly unprofitable to be but almoſt a Chriſtian*, for failing in any one point will ruine us, as ſurely as if we had never made any attempts for Heaven. It is no advantage to the ſoul to be *almoſt converted*; for the little that we want, ſpoils the good of all our attainments; We ſay, as good never a whit as never the near, *ad nihilum valet quod non valet ad finem ſuum*: there is no profit in leaving this or that ſin, unleſs we leave all ſin; *Herod* heard *John* gladly, and did many things, but he kept his *Herodias*, and that ruined him. *Judas* did many things, prayed much, preached much, profeſſed much, but yet his covetouſneſs ſpoiled all; one ſin ruined the young man, that had kept all the Commands but one. Thus he *that offends in one point is guilty of all.* That is, that lives willingly and allowedly in any one ſin, he brings the guilt of the violation of the whole Law of God upon his ſoul, and that upon a twofold account.

Deus non vult cum exceptione coli.

Jam. 2. 10

1. Becauſe he manifeſts the ſame contempt of the Authority of God,

in the wilful breach of one, as of all.

2. By allowing himſelf in the breach of any one Command, he ſhews he kept none in obedience and conſcience to God, for he that hates ſin, as ſin, hates all ſin; and he that obeys the Command as the expreſs will of God, obeys every Command. And for this cauſe the leaſt ſin willingly, and with allowance lived in, ſpoils the good of all our obedience, and lays the ſoul under the whole wrath of God. One leak in a Ship may ſink her, though ſhe be tite every where elſe; *Gideon* had *ſeven Sons*, and but *one Baſtard*, and yet that *one Baſtard* deſtroyed *all his Sons*, ſo may one ſin ſpoile all our ſervices, one luſt beloved may ſpoil all our profeſſion, as that one Baſtard ſlew all the Sons of *Gideon*. Iudge. 8. 30,31. comp. with chap. 9. v. 5.

Secondly, *It is exceedingly uncomfortable*, as appears three ways.

1. *In that ſuch a one is hated of God and men*, the World hates him becauſe *of his profeſſion*, and God abhors him, becauſe *of his diſſimulation*,

on; the World hates him, becauſe Rev.3.15 *he ſeems good*, and God hates him, becauſe *he doth but ſeem ſo*. No perſon that God hates more then the *almoſt Chriſtian*; ver. 6. *I would thou wert either cold or hot*, either *all a Chriſtian*, or not *at all a Chriſtian*.

Tepida evomere conſuevimus, unde ad vomitum ciendum quidam aquâ tepidâ utuntur. Druſius.

Becauſe thou art neither cold nor hot, therefore I will ſpew thee out of my mouth. What a lothſome expreſſion doth God here uſe,* to ſhew what an utter abhorrency there is in him againſt luke-warm Chriſtians.

How uncomfortable then muſt that condition needs be wherein a man is abhorred both of God and man.

2. *It is uncomfortable in regard of ſufferings*; for being *almoſt a Chriſtian*, will bring us into ſuffering, but being *but almoſt a Chriſtian*, will never carry us through ſuffering, in *Mat.* 13. 20, 21. It is ſaid, *he that receiveth the ſeed into ſtony ground, the ſame is he that hears the Word, and with joy receives it; yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the Word, by and by he is offended.*

1. There

There are four things obſervable in the Words.

1. That the ſtony ground may receive the word with joy.

2. That it may for ſome time abide in a profeſſion of it, *he dureth for a while.*

3. That this profeſſion will expoſe to ſuffering; for mark, perſecution is ſaid to ariſe becauſe of the Word.

4. This ſuffering will cauſe an apoſtatizing from profeſſion, for that which is here called offence, is in *Luk.* 8. 13. called falling away, *which for a while beleive, and in time of temptation fall away.*

I gather hence, a profeſſion may expoſe a man as much to ſuffering, as the power of godlineſs; but without the power of godlineſs there is no holding out in a profeſſion, under ſuffering. The World hates the *ſhew* of godlineſs, and therefore perſecutes it, *the almoſt Chriſtian* wants the *ſubſtance*, and therefore cannot hold out in it

Now this muſt needs be very uncomfortable; if I profeſs Religion, I am like to ſuffer; if I do but profeſs it, I am never like to indure.

3. *It is uncomfortable in regard of that deceit it lays our hopes under*; to be deceived of our hopes, cauſeth ſorrow as well as ſhame; he that is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, hopes for heaven, but unleſs he be *altogether a Chriſtian* he ſhall never come there.

Now to periſh with hope of Heaven, to go to Hell by the gates of glory, to come to the very door, and then be ſhut out, as the *five Virgins* were, to dy in the Wilderneſs, within ſight of the promiſed land, at the very brinks of *Jordan*, this muſt needs be ſad, to come within a ſtride of the Goal and miſs it, to ſink within ſight of harbour; Oh how uncomfortable is this? Mat. 25. 10.

3. *As it is greatly unprofitable, and exceedingly uncomfortable, to be but almoſt a Chriſtian, ſo it is deſperately dangerous*. For,

1. *This doth* obicem ponere, *it hinders the true work*, a man lies in a fairer capacity for converſion, that lies in open enmity and Rebellion, then he that ſooth's up himſelf in the formalities

of Religion. This I gather from that parable of the *two Sons* which our Lord Chriſt urged to the profeſſing *Scribes and Phariſees*, Mat. 21. 28.

Mat. 21. 28, 29, 30, 31.

There was a man had two Sons, and he came to one and ſaid go work to day in my Vineyard; He ſaid, I will not; but afterwards repented and went.

And he came to the ſecond, and ſaid likewiſe; and he ſaid, I go Sir, but went not.

The firſt repreſents the carnal open ſinner, that is called by the word, but refuſes, yet afterwards repents and beleives. The ſecond repreſents the Hypocritical profeſſor, that pretends much, but performes little; Now mark how Chriſt applies this Parable, *v.* 31. *Verily I ſay unto you, that the Publicans and the Harlots, go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

And upon this account it is better not to be at all, then to be almoſt a Chriſtian, for the almoſt hinders the altogether. It is better (in this regard) to be a ſinner without a profeſſion, then to be a profeſſor without

out converſion, for the one lies fairer for an inward change, when the other reſts in an outward. Our Lord Chriſt tels the *Scribe*, Mar. 12. 34. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, and yet never like to come there. None farther from the Kingdom of God, then ſuch as are not far from the Kingdom of God. As for inſtance, when there lies but one luſt, one ſin between a ſoul and Chriſt, that ſoul is not far from Chriſt, but now when the ſoul reſts in this nearneſs to Chriſt, and yet will not part with that one luſt for Chriſt, but thinks his condition ſecured, though that luſt be not ſubdued, who is farther from the Kingdom of God then he?

So our Lord Chriſt tells the young man, *Mar.* 20. 21. *One thing thou lackeſt*, why he was very neer Heaven, near being a Chriſtian altogether, he was almoſt ſaved, he tells Chriſt he had kept all the Commands, *v.* 20. He lacked but *one thing*; I ſay, but one thing, but it was a great thing, that *one thing* he lacked was more then *all things* he had, for it was the one *thing neceſſary*, it was a new heart, a work of grace in his ſoul, a change of ſtate, a heart weaned from the world, I, this was the one thing. and he that lacks this one thing, periſhes with his all things elſe. Lu. 10.42

2, *This condition is ſo like a ſtate of grace, that the miſtake of it for grace is eaſie and common*; and it is very dangerous to miſtake any thing for grace, that is not grace, for in that a man contents himſelf, as if it were grace. *Formality* doth often dwell next door to *ſincerity*, and one ſign ſerves both, and ſo the houſe may be eaſily miſtaken, and by that means a man may take up his lodging there, and never find the way out again.

What one ſaith of Wiſdom, *Multi ad ſapientiam perveniſſent, niſi ſe jam perveniſſe putaſſent*, many might have been wiſe, had they not thought themſelves ſo, when they were otherwiſe; The ſame I may ſay of grace, many a formal profeſſor might have been a ſincere beleiver, had he not miſtook his profeſſion for converſion on, his duties for graces, and ſo reſted in that for ſincerity, which is but Hypocriſie.

3. *It is a degree of blaſphemy to pretend to grace, and yet have no grace,* I gather this from that *Revel.* 2.9. *I know the blaſphemy of them which ſay they are Jews and are not.* This place under-goes varieties of conſtructions, *Grotius* and *Parem*, do not make their blaſphemy to lye in their ſaying, *they are Jews and are not*; but to lye in the reproaches that theſe *Jews* faſtened upon Chriſt, calling him *impoſter*, *deceiver*, *one that hath a Devil*; &c.

Bright-man goes another way, and ſaith, this was the blaſphemy of theſe *Jews*, they retained that way of Worſhip that was abrogated; and thruſt upon God thoſe old *Rites* and *Ceremonies* which Jeſus Chriſt had aboliſhed, *and nailed to his Croſs*, by which they overthrew the glory of Chriſt, and denyed his comming. So that the retaining of Altar-Worſhip, and the reſt of the Levitical Ceremonies in Goſpel Churches, is in *Bright-mans* ſenſe, Col.2.14.

ſenſe, a denying Chriſt is come, and conſequently a degree of Blaſphemy.

But I conceive the blaſphemy of theſe Jews to lye in this, that *they ſaid they were Jews and were not.* A Jew here is not to be taken litterally and ſtrictly onely, for one of the lineage of *Abraham*, but it is to be taken *Metonymically*, for a true Beleiver, one of the ſpiritual ſeed of *Abraham*; *He is a Jew which is one inwardly*; ſo that for a man to ſay he is a Jew when he is not, to profeſs an intereſt in Chriſt when he hath none, to ſay he hath grace when he hath none, this Chriſt calls Blaſphemy. Ro. 2. 29.

But why ſhould Chriſt call this *Blaſphemy?* this is *Hypocriſie*, but how may it be ſaid to be *Blaſphemy?* Why? he blaſphemes the great Attribute of *Gods Omniſciency*; he doth implicitly denie that God ſees and knows our hearts and thoughts; for if a man did beleeve the Omniſciency of God, that he ſearches the heart, and ſees, and knows all within. He would not dare to reſt in a graceleſs profeſſion of godlineſs; this therefore is blaſphemy in the account of Chriſt.

4. *It is dangerous to be almoſt a Chriſtian, in that this ſtills, and ſerves to quiet conſcience.* Now it is very dangerous to quiet conſcience, with any thing but the blood of Chriſt; It is bad being at peace, till Chriſt ſpeaks peace, nothing can truely pacifie conſcience, leſs then that which pacifies God, and that is the blood of the Lord Chriſt.

..Bello pax ea deterior.

Now the almoſt Chriſtian quiets conſcience, but not with the blood of Chriſt, it is not a peace flowing from Chriſts *propitiation*, but a peace riſing from a *formal profeſſion*, not a peace of Chriſts giving, but a peace of his own making; He ſilences and bribes conſcience, with a forme of godlineſs, and ſo makes it give way to an undoing, ſoul deſtroying peace; he rocks it aſleep in the Cradle of duties, and then it is a thouſand to one, it never awaketh more till death or judgment.

Ah my brethren it is better to have conſcience never quiet, then quieted any way but by *the blood of Sprinkling*, a good conſcience unquiet is the greateſt affliction to Saints, and an evil conſcience quiet is the greateſt judgment to ſinners.

5. *It is dangerous to be almoſt a Chriſtian in reſpect of the unpardonable ſin*, the ſin that the Scripture ſaith, *can never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come*, I mean *the ſin againſt the holy Ghoſt*, now ſuch are onely capable of ſinning that ſin as are but almoſt Chriſtians. Mat. 12. 32.

A true beleiver cannot; the work of grace in his heart, that *ſeed of God abiding in him*, ſecures him againſt it, 1 *Joh.* 3. 9. compared with the 5. *Chap.* 16, 17, 18.

The prophane, open, ignorant ſinner cannot, though he lives daily and hourly in ſin, yet he cannot commit this ſin, for it muſt be from an enlightned mind; every ſinner under the Goſpel eſpecially, ſins ſadly againſt the Holy Ghoſt; againſt the ſtrivings and motions of the Spirit; he *reſiſts the holy ghoſt, but yet this is* not the ſin *againſt the holy Ghoſt*. Act. 7. 51.

There muſt be three ingredients to make up that ſin.

1. It muſt be wilful, *Heb.* 10. 26. *if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin.*

2. It muſt be againſt light and convictions, *after we have received the knowledge of the truth.*

3. It muſt be *deſtinatâ malitia*, in reſolved malice; Now you ſhall find all theſe ingredients into the ſin of the *Phariſees*, *Mat.* 12. 22. Chriſt *heals* one that was *poſſeſſed with a Devil*, a great work which all the people wondred at, *v.* 23. But what ſay the *Phariſees*, ſee *v.* 24. *This fellow caſteth out Devils, by the Prince of Devils*; now that this was *the ſin againſt the holy ghoſt* is clear, for it was both wilful, and malicious, and againſt clear convictions, they could not but ſee that he was the Son of God, and that this work was a peculiar work of the Spirit of God in him, and yet they ſay he wrought by the Devil.

Blaſphemia in ſpiritum ſanctum ea eſt qua quis deſtinata malitia contra proprium animi ſui ſenſum, ſpiritus ſancti gratiam & virtutem, deiq; gloriam oppugnat. Luc. Brugens. in Mat. 12.

Devil. Whereupon Chriſt charges them with this ſin *againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, *v.* 31. 32. now theſe *Phariſees* were a ſort of great profeſſors; whence I gather this concluſion, That it is the profeſſor of Religion that is the ſubject of this ſin; Not the open carnal ſinner, not the true beleiver, but the formal profeſſor.

compare this with. Mark. 3. 28, 29, 30.

Not the ſinner, for he hath *neither light nor grace*; not the beleiver, for he hath both *light and grace*; therefore the formal profeſſor, for he hath *light but no grace.* Here then is the great danger of being almoſt a Chriſtian, he is liable to this dreadful *unpardonable ſin.*

6. *This being but almoſt a Chriſtian ſubjects us to apoſtacy*, he that gets no good by walking in the ways of God, will quickly leave them, and walk no more in them; this I gather from *Hoſ.* 14. 9. *Who is wiſe, and he ſhall underſtand theſe things? prudent, and he ſhall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them, but the tranſgreſſors ſhall fall therein.*

The juſt ſhall walk in them] he whoſe heart is renewed and made right with God, he ſhall keep cloſe to God in his ways.

But the tranſgreſſours ſhall fall therein] the word in the Hebrew is פשעים *peſhangim*, from a word that ſignifies *to prevaricate*, ſo that we may read the words thus; *The ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them, but he that prevaricates*, that is a Hypocrite in the Ways of God, *he ſhall fall therein.*

An unſound heart will never hold out long in the ways of God. *Joh.* 5. 35. *He was a burning and a ſhining light, and ye were willing for a ſeaſon to rejoyce in that light.*

For a ſeaſon] πρὸς ὥραν for *an hour*, a ſhort ſpace and then they left him. It is a notable queſtion *Job* puts concerning the Hypocrite; *Will he delight himſelf in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?* Job 27.10

He may do much, but theſe two things he cannot do.

He cannot make God his delight.

He cannot perſevere in duties, at all

all times, and in all conditions.

He will be an Apoſtate at laſt, the *ſcab of Hypocriſie,* uſually breaks out in the *plague ſoar of Apoſtacy*; Converſion ground is ſtanding ground, it is *terra firma*, but a graceleſs profeſſion of Religion is ſlippery ground, and falling ground; *Julian* the Apoſtate, was firſt *Julian* the profeſſour. I know it is poſſible a beleiver may fall, but yet *he riſes again*, *the everlaſting arms are underneath*, but when the hypocrite falls, who ſhall help him up? Pro.24. 16. Deut.33. 27.

Salomon ſaith, *Wo to him that is alone when he falls*, that is without intereſt in Chriſt; why, wo to him? *for he hath none to help him up*; if Jeſus Chriſt do not recover him, who can? *David* fell and was reſtored, for he had one to help him up; but *Judas* fell and periſhed, for he was alone. Eccl.4 10

7. ***This being but almoſt a Chriſtian, provokes God to bring dreadful ſpiritual judgement upon a man.***

Barrenneſs is a ſpiritual judgment, now this provokes God to give us up to barrenneſs ; when Chriſt found the fig-tree that had leaves but no fruit, he pronounces the curſe of barrenneſs upon it ; *Never fruit grow on thee more* ; and ſo *Ezek.* 47. 11 *The miry places thereof, and the mariſh places thereof, ſhall not be healed, they ſhall be given to ſalt.* Mat.21. 19.

A Spirit of deluſion is a ſad judgement ; why this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment, that receives the truth, but not in the love of it, *becauſe they received not the love of the truth, that they might be ſaved. for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion.* 2 Theſ.2. 10,11,12.

To loſe either light or ſight, either ordinances or eyes is a great ſpiritual judgment ; why, this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment ; he that profits not under the means, provokes God to take away either light or ſight ; either the ordinances from before his eyes, Or elſe to blind his eyes under the Ordinances. Lu.19.42

To have a hard heart is a dreadful judgement, and there is no Hypocrite but he hath a hard heart.

My Brethren, it is a dreadful thing,

for God to give a man up to ſpiritual judgments.

Now this being *almoſt a Chriſtian*, provokes God to give a man up to ſpiritual judgements, ſurely therefore it is a very dangerous thing to be almoſt a Chriſtian.

8. *Being almoſt, and but almoſt Chriſtians, will exceedingly agravate our damnation*; the higher a man riſes under the means, the lower he falls if he miſcarries, he that falls but a little ſhort of Heaven, will fall deepeſt into Hell; he that hath been neareſt to converſion, being not converted, ſhall have the deepeſt damnation when he is judged. *Capernaums* ſentence ſhall exceed *Sodoms* for ſeverity, becauſe ſhe exceeded *Sodom* in the injoyment of mercy, ſhe received more *from God*, ſhe knew more *of God*, ſhe profeſſed more *for God*, and yet was not right *with God*, therefore ſhe ſhall be puniſhed more *by God*. Mat. 11. 23, 24.

The higher the riſe, the greater the fall, the higher the profeſſion, the lower the damnation: he miſcarryeth with a light in his hand, he periſheth under many convictions, and convictions never end but in a *ſound converſion* as in all Saints; or in a *ſad damnation*, as in all Hypocrites; praying ground, hearing ground, profeſſing ground, and conviction ground, is of all the worſt ground to periſh upon.

Now then to ſum up all under this head.

If to be almoſt a Chriſtian hinders the true work of converſion.

If it be eaſily miſtaken for converſion.

If it be a degree of blaſphemy.

If this be that which quiets conſcience.

If this ſubjects a man to commit the unpardonable ſin.

If it lays us lyable to apoſtacy.

If it provokes God, to give us up to ſpiritual judgments.

And if it be that which exceedingly agravate's our damnation, ſure then it is a very dangerous thing to be almoſt, and but almoſt a Chriſtian.

A Uſe of Exhort.

Oh labour to be altogether Chriſtians

to go farther then they who have gone fartheſt, and yet fell ſhort; this is the great counſel of the holy Ghoſt. *So run that ye may obtain*, 1 Cor. 9. 24. *Give diligence to make your calling and election ſure*, 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Need you any motives to quicken you up to this important duty?

Conſid. 1

1. *This is that which is not onely commanded by God, but that whereunto all the Commands of God tend*; a perfect conformity of heart and life to God, is the ſum and ſubſtance of all the Commands both of the Old and New Teſtament. As the *Harlot* was for the *dividing the child*, ſo is Satan for dividing the heart, he would have our love and affections ſhared between Chriſt and our luſts, for he knows that Chriſt reckons we love him not *at all*, unleſs we love him *above all*. But God will have all or none. *My Son give me thy heart*, Prov. 23. 26. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, with all thy might*, Deut. 6. 5.

1 Kings 3.16,26.

Lu. 10.27

Look into the Scripture, and ſee what that is upon which your *onely* ſtands, and you ſhall find that God hath fixed it upon thoſe great duties, which alone tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians.

God hath fixed your *Onely* upon beleiving, *Mar.* 5. 36. *onely beleive.*

God hath fixed your *onely* upon obedience, *Mat.* 4. 10. *Thou ſhalt Worſhip the Lord thy God, and him onely ſhalt thou ſerve.* Philip. 1. 27. *Onely let your converſation be as becommeth the Goſpel of Chriſt*; So that your *onely* is fixed by God upon thoſe two great duties of *beleiving and obeying*, both which tend to the perfection of your ſtate as Chriſtians.

Now, ſhall God command, and ſhall not we obey? can there be a higher motive to duty then the authority of the great God, whoſe will is the eternal rule of righteouſneſs? O lets fear *God and keep his commandements*, for this is כל-האדם the *totum hominis, the whole duty* of man, ſo we read it.

Conſid. 2 2. *The Lord Chriſt is a Saviour throughout, a perfect and compleat mediator*; he hath not ſhed his blood by halves, nor ſatisfied the juſtice of God, and redeemed ſinners by halves ; No, but he went through with his undertakings, he bore all our ſins, and ſhed all his blood, he dyed *to the utmoſt*, ſatisfied the Juſtice of God *to the utmoſt*, redeemed ſinners *to the utmoſt*, and now that he is in Heaven he intercedeth *to the utmoſt, and is able to ſave to the utmoſt.* Heb. 7. 25.

It is obſerved that our Lord Chriſt when he was upon earth, in the days of his fleſh, he wrought no *Semiplenam curationem*, no half cures, but whomſoever they brought to him for healing, he healed them throughout, *Mat.* 14. 35, 36. *they brought unto him all that were diſeaſed, and beſought him that they might onely touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

Oh what an excellent Phyſician is here, none like him, he cureth { *Infallibly*, *Suddenly*, *Perfectly*,

He cureth *infallibly*, none ever came to him for healing that went without it, he never practiſed upon any that miſcarryed under his hand.

He cureth *ſuddainly*, no ſooner is his garment touched, but his patient is healed, *The Leper* Mat. 8. 3. is no ſooner touched but *immediately* cured, the *two blind men* Mat. 20. are no ſooner touched, but their eyes are *immediately opened*, v. 34. Mar 1.31 & 2. 12. Luk. 8. 44

He cureth *perfectly*, as many as were touched were made *perfectly whole*. Mat. 14. 36.

Now all this was to ſhew what a perfect and compleat Saviour Jeſus Chriſt would be to all ſinners that would but come to him. They ſhould find healing in his blood, vertue in his righteouſneſs, and pardon for all their ſins, whatever they were; look as Chriſt healed all the Diſeaſes of all that came to him when he was on Earth, ſo he pardons all the ſins, and healeth all the wounds of all thoſe ſouls that come to him, now he is in Heaven.

He is a Saviour throughout, and ſhall not we be Saints throughout? ſhall he be altogether a Redeemer, and ſhall not we be altogether beleivers?

O

O what a ſhame is this!

3. *There is enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Chriſtians*, and that whether we reſpect profit or comfort, for Grace brings both. *Conſid.* 3

Firſt, *Religion is a gainful thing*, and this is *argumentum cogens*, a compelling motive, that becomes effectual upon all, *gain* is the *God* whom the World Worſhips; what will not men do, what will they not ſuffer, for gain? what journies do many take by Land, what voyages by Sea, through hot and cold, through fair and foul, through ſtorme and ſhine, through day and night, and all for gain.

Now there is no calling, ſo gainful as this of Religion, it is the moſt profitable imployment we can take up. *Godlineſs is profitable unto all things.* 1 Tim. 4. 8. It is μέγας πορισμὸς, a great revenue, if it be cloſely followed, it brings in the greateſt income; indeed ſome men are Religious for the Worlds ſake, ſuch ſhall be ſure not to gain; but they who are Religious for Religions ſake, ſhall be ſure not to loſe if, Heaven and

Earth can recompence them, for *godlineſs hath the promiſe of both, of the* 1 Tim. 4. 8. *life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

Ah who would not be a Chriſtian, when the gain of godlineſs is ſo great! many gain much in their Worldly calling, but the profit which the true beleiver hath from one hours communion with God in Chriſt, weigheth down all the gain of the World; curſed be that man who counts all the gain in the World, worth one hours communion with Jeſus Chriſt; ſaid that Noble Marqueſs *Galeacius Garacciola.* It is no where ſaid in Scripture, happy is the man that findeth ſilver, and the man that getteth fine gold; theſe are of no weight in the ballance of the Sanctuary, but it is ſaid, *Happy is the man* Prov. 3. 13,14. *that findeth wiſdom; and the man that getteth underſtanding; for the Merchandiſe of it, is better then the Merchandiſe of ſilver, and the gain thereof then fine gold.*

By *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding* here, we are to underſtand the *grace* *of Chriſt*, and ſo the Spirit of God interpreteth it. *Job* 28. 28. *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding*

Now of all Merchants, he that Trades in this Wiſdom and Underſtanding, will prove the richeſt man, one grain of godlineſs out-weigheth all the gold of *Ophir*, there is no riches, like being rich in grace. For.

1. *This is the moſt neceſſary riches*, other things are not ſo, ſilver and gold are not ſo, we may be, and be happy without them; there is but *one thing neceſſary*, and that is the grace of Jeſus Chriſt in the heart; have this, and have all; want this, and want all.

2. *It is the moſt ſubſtantial gain*, the things of this World, are more ſhadow then ſubſtance; *pleaſure, honour*, and *profit*, comprehend all things in this World, and therefore are the carnal mans trinity. Lu.16.11

Ambitioſus honos ; & opes , & fœda
voluptas.
Hæc tria pro trino Numine mundus
habet.

The Apoſtle *John* calls them, *the luſt of the fleſh , the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life ,* this (ſaith he) *is all that is in the World* ; and truely if this be all , all is nothing ; For what is *pleaſure* , but a *dream* and *conceit ?* What is *honour* but *fancy* and *opinion ?* And what is *profit* , but a *thing of nought ? Why wilt thou ſet thine eys upon that which is not ?* Prov. 23. 5. the things of the World have in them no ſolid *ſubſiſtence* , though fooliſh carnal men call them *ſubſtance.*

1 Joh. 2. 19.

ראיננו *Et non existunt*

But now grace is a *ſubſtantial* good , ſo our Lord Chriſt calls it, *Prov.* 9. 21. *That I may cauſe thoſe that love me to inherit ſubſtance ,* להנחיל יש, *to inherit that which is* ; grace is a reality , other things are but ſhew and fancy.

3. *Godlineſs is the ſafeſt gain* ; the

gain of worldly things is always with difficulty, but ſeldom with ſafety; the ſoul is often hazarded in the over-eager perſuit of worldly things; nay thouſands do pawn, and loſe, and damn their precious ſouls eternally for a little ſilver and gold, which are but the *guts and garbage* of the Earth. *And what is a man profited to gain the whole World, if he loſe his ſoul?* Mar. 16. 26.

But the gain of *godlineſs*, is ever with ſafety to the ſoul, nay the ſoul is loſt and undone without it, and not ſaved but by the attainment of it; a ſoul without grace, is in a loſt and periſhing condition; the hazard of eternity is never over with us, until the grace of Chriſt Jeſus be ſought by us, and wrought in us.

4. *Godlineſs is the ſureſt profit*, as it is *ſafe*, ſo it is *ſure*, men make great ventures for the World, but all runs upon uncertainties; many venture much, and wait long, and yet find no return but diſappointment, they ſow much, and yet reap nothing. 1 Tim. 6. 17.

But the gain of godlineſs is ſure, *Pov.* 11. 18. *To him that ſoweth righteouſneſs; ſhall be a ſure reward.*

And as the things of this World are uncertain in the *getting*, ſo they are uncertain in the *keeping.*

Non minor eſt virtus quam quærere parta tueri.

If *men* do not undo us, *Moths* may; if *Robbery* doth not, *ruſt* may; if *ruſt* doth not, *fire* may; to which all earthly treaſures are incident, as our Lord Chriſt teacheth us, *Mat.* 6. 19. *Salomon* limneth the World with Wings. *Prov.* 23. 5. *riches take themſelves wings and fly, as an Eagle towards Heaven.* A man may be rich as *Dives* to day, and yet poor as *Lazarus* to morrow; Oh how uncertain are all worldly things?

Habent non alas paſſerinas, ſed aquilinas.

But now the true treaſure of grace in the heart, that can never be loſt, it is out of the reach both of *ruſt* and *robber*; *he that gets the World, gets a good he can never keep; but he that gets grace, gets a good he ſhall never loſe.*

5. *The profit of godlineſs, lieth not onely in this World, but in the World to come*, all other profit, lyeth in this World onely, riches and honours &c. are called this *Worlds good*; but the riches of godlineſs is cheifly in the other Worlds goods, in the injoyment of God and Jeſus Chriſt, and the Holy Spirit, among Saints and Angels in glory; lo this is the *gain of godlineſs, ſuch honour have all his Saints*. 1 Tim. 4. 8 1 Io. 3. 17 Pſa. 149. 9

6. *The gain of godlineſs is a durable and eternal gain*; all this Worlds goods are periſhing; periſhing pleaſures, periſhing honours, periſhing profits, periſhing comforts; *riches are not for ever*; ſaith *Job*, *haſt thou entred into the treaſures of the Snow?* Iob 38. 22 *Gregory* upon theſe words obſerves, that earthly treaſures, are treaſures of Snow; What pains do children take to ſcrape and rowl the Snow together, to make a Snow-Ball, which is no ſooner done, but the heat of the Sun diſſolves it, and it comes to nothing. Why the treaſures of worldly men, are but treaſures of

Snow; when death and judgement come, they melt away and come to nothing. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteouſneſs delivers from death*, Prov. 11. 4.

You ſee here the great advantage of godlineſs, ſo that if we look at profit, we ſhall find enough in Religion to ingage us to be *altogether Chriſtians.* Or,

2. *If we look at comfort*, Religion is the moſt comfortable profeſſion, there are no comforts to be compared to the comforts of grace and godlineſs.

1. *Worldly comfort is onely outward*, it is but skin deep, *in the midſt of laughter the heart is ſorrowful*, Prov. 14. 13. but now the comfort that flows from godlineſs is an inward comfort, a ſpiritual joy, therefore it is called *gladneſs of heart.* Pſal. 4. 7. *Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart.* Other joy ſmooths the brow, but this fils the breſt.

2. *Worldly comfort hath a nether ſpring*, the ſpring of worldly comfort is in the creature, in ſome earthly injoy-

joyment, and therefore the comfort of worldly men muſt needs be mixed and muddy; *an unclean fountain cannot ſend forth pure water.* But ſpiritual comfort hath *an upper ſpring*; the comfort that accompanies godlineſs flows from the manifeſtations of the Love of God in Chriſt, from the workings of the bleſſed Spirit in the heart, which is firſt a *Counſellour*, and then a *Comforter*; And therefore the comforts of the Saints muſt needs be pure and unmixed comforts, for they flow from a pure Spring. Iam. 3.11.

3. *Worldly comfort is very fading and tranſitory*; *The triumphing of the wicked is ſhort, and the joy of the Hypocrite is but for a moment. Salomon* compares it to the crackling of Thornes under a pot, *Eccleſ.* 7. 6. which is but a blaze and ſoon out, ſo is the comfort of carnal hearts; But now the comfort of godlineſs is a durable and abiding comfort, *your heart ſhall rejoyce, and your joy no man ſhall take from you.* Iob.20.5. Io.16.22.

The comfort of godlineſs is laſting, and everlaſting it abides by us { *In life,*
In death,
After death.

Phili.1.2. Coloſ.1.2. Firſt, *It abides by us in life, grace* and *peace* go together, godlineſs brings forth comfort and peace natu-
Iſa.32.17. rally, *the effect of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace*, it is ſaid of the primitive Chriſtians, *they walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt*, Acts 9. 31. every duty done in uprightneſs and ſincerity, reflects
Pſa.19.11 ſome comfort upon the ſoul; *In keeping the Commands there is great reward*, not onely for *keeping* of them; but in *keeping* of them; as every flower, ſo every duty, carries ſweetneſs and refreſhing with it.

Object. *But who more dejected and diſconſolate then Saints and beleivers? whoſe lives are more uncomfortable? whoſe mouths are more filled with complaints then theirs? if a condition of godlineſs and Chriſtianity, be a condition of ſo much comfort, then why are they thus?*

That

Sol. That the people of God are often times without comfort, that I grant, *they may walk in the dark and have no light*; but this is none of the product of godlineſs, grace brings forth no ſuch fruit as this, there is a threefold riſe and ſpring of it. Iſa. 50. 10.

Sin within

Deſertion } without
Temptation }

1. *Sin within*, the Saints of God are not all Spirit and no fleſh, all grace and no ſin; they are made up of contrary principles, there is *light and darkneſs* in the ſame *mind*; *ſin and grace* in the ſame *will*; *carnal* and *ſpiritual* in the ſame *affections*; there is the *fleſh luſting againſt the ſpirit* in all theſe, and too often, the Lord knows, is the beleiver led away captive by theſe warring luſts; ſo was the holy Apoſtle himſelf, *I find then a Law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me*; Rom. 7. 21. and *v.* 23. *I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law* Gal. 5. 17. Ro. 7. 23.

of my mind, and bringing me into captivity, to the law of ſin, and this was that which broke his ſpiritual peace, and filled his ſoul with trouble and complaints, as you ſee in the 24. *v. O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death!*

So that it is ſin that interrupts the peace of Gods people, indwelling luſt, ſtirring and breaking forth, muſt needs cauſe trouble and grief in the ſoul of a beleiver; for it is as natural for ſin to bring forth trouble, as it is for grace to bring forth peace; every ſin contracts a new guilt upon the ſoul, and guilt provokes God, and where there is a ſenſe of guilt contracted, and God provoked, there can be no peace, no quiet in that ſoul, till faith procures freſh ſprinklings of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt upon the Conſcience.

2. *Another Spring of the beleivers trouble and diſconſolateneſs of ſpirit is the deſertions of God*; and this follows upon the former; God doth ſometimes diſappear, and hide himſelf

from his people, *verily thou art a God that hideſt thy ſelf*, Iſa. 45.15. But the cauſe of Gods hiding, is the beleivers ſinning, *your iniquities have ſeparated between you and your God, and your ſins have hid his face from you*, Iſa. 59. 2. In Heaven where there is no ſinning, there is no loſing the light of Gods countenance for a moment; and *if* Saints here could ſerve God without *corruption*, they ſhould injoy God without *deſertion*; but this cannot be, while we are in this ſtate remaining luſts will ſtir and break forth, and then God will hide his face; and this muſt needs be trouble, *thou didſt hide thy face and I was troubled*, Pſ.30.7. Pſa.13.1.

The light of Gods countenance ſhining upon the ſoul is the Chriſtians Heaven on this ſide Heaven, and therefore it is no wonder if the hiding of his face, be looked upon by the ſoul as one of the dayes of Hell, ſo it was by *David*. *The ſorrows of death compaſſed me, the pains of Hell gate hold upon me; I found trouble and ſorrow.* Pſa.116.3

3. *A third ſpring of that trouble and complaint that brims the banks of*

the Chriſtians ſpirit, *is the temptaions of Satan*, he is ὁ ἐχθρὸς the great enemy of Saints, and he envieth the quiet and comfort that their hearts are filled with, when his conſcience is brimmed with horrour and terrour; and therefore though he knows he cannot deſtroy their grace, yet he labours to diſturb their peace: As the bleſſed Spirit of God is firſt a *Sanctifier*, and then a comforter, working grace, in order and peace; ſo this curſed Spirit of Hell, is firſt a *Tempter* and then a *Troubler*, firſt perſwading to act ſin, and then accuſing for ſin, and this is his conſtant practiſe upon the Spirits of Gods people; he cannot indure that they ſhould live in the light of Gods countenance when himſelf is doomed to an eternal intolerable darkneſs. Mat. 13. 39.

And thus you ſee whence it is that the people of God are often under trouble and complaint, all ariſes from theſe three ſprings of

Sin within.

* *Deſertions* } without
Temptations }

If the Saints could ſerve God without ſinning, and injoy God without withdrawing, and reſiſt Satan without yeilding, they might injoy peace and comfort without ſorrowing, this muſt be indeavoured conſtantly here, but it will never be attained fully but in Heaven.

But yet ſo far as grace is the prevailing principle in the heart, and ſo far as the power of godlineſs is exerciſed in the life, ſo far the condition of a Child of God is a condition of peace, for it is an undoubted truth, *that the fruit of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace*: But ſuppoſe the people of God experience little of this comfort in life, yet

2. *They find it in the day of death*; grace and holineſs will Miniſter unto us then, and that miniſtration will be peace. A beleiver hath a twofold ſpring of comfort each one emptying

it ſelf into his ſoul in a dying ſeaſon? one is from above him, the other is from within him; the ſpring that runs comfort from above him, is *the blood of Chriſt ſprinkled upon the conſcience*, the ſpring that runs comfort from within him; is, *the ſincerity of his heart in Gods ſervice*; When we lye upon a death-bead, and can reflect upon our principles, and performances in the ſervice of God, and there find uprightneſs and ſincerity of heart running through all, this muſt needs be comfort, it was ſo to *Hezekiah*, *Remember O Lord; how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight*. Iſa 38. 3.

Nothing maketh a Death-bed ſo uneaſie and hard, as a life ſpent in the ſervice of ſin and luſt, nothing makes a Death-bed ſo ſoft and ſweet as a life ſpent in the ſervice of God and Chriſt. Or put the caſe, the people of God ſhould not meet with this comfort then, yet

3. *They ſhall be ſure to find it after Death*; if time bring none of this

fruit to ripeneſs, why yet eternity ſhall; *grace* in time, will be *glory in eternity*; *holineſs* now, will be *happineſs* then; *what ever it is that a man ſoweth* in this World, *that he ſhall* be ſure to *reap* in the next World; *He that ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but he that ſoweth to the ſpirit, ſhall of the ſpirit reap life everlaſting*; When ſin ſhall end in ſorrow and miſery, holineſs ſhall end in joy and glory; *well done thou good and faithful ſervant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Mat. 25. 23. Whoever ſhareth in the grace of Chriſt, and conformeth to the life of Chriſt in this World, ſhall ſhare in the joys of Chriſt in the World to come, and that joy is *joy unſpeakable and full of glory*; Lo here is the fruit of godlineſs; ſay now if there be not enough in Religion, whether we reſpect profit or comfort, to ingage us to be Chriſtians throughout. Gal. 6. 7. Gal. 6. 8. Ro. 6. 23. 1Pet. 1. 8

4. *What an intire reſignation wicked men make of themſelves to their luſts, and ſhall not we do ſo to the Lord Chriſt?* *Conſid.* 4

Chriſt? they give up themſelves without reſerve to the pleaſures of ſin, and ſhall we have our reſerves in the ſervice of God? they are altogether ſinners, and ſhall not we be altogether Saints? they *run and not faint* in the ſervice of their luſts, and ſhall we faint and not run in the ſervice of Chriſt? ſhall the ſevants of corruption have their *ears boared*, at the Door-poſts of ſin, in token of an intire and perpetual ſervice; and ſhall not we give up our ſelves to the Lord Chriſt to be his for ever? ſhall others make a *Covenant with Hell and death*, and ſhall not we *joyn our ſelves to God in an everlaſting Covenant that cannot be forgotten? Acrius illi ad perniciem quam nos ad ſalutem?* ſhall they take more pains to damn their ſouls, then we do to ſave ours, and make more ſpeed to a place of vengeance, then we do to a *crown of righteouſneſs?*

Exo.21.6
Iſa.28.15
Ier.50.5.
2Tim.4 8

Which do you judge beſt; to be ſaved everlaſtingly, or to periſh everlaſtingly? which do you count the beſt Maſter, God or the Devil? Chriſt or your luſts? I know you will determine it on Chriſts ſide: Oh then! when others ſerve their luſts with all their hearts, do you ſerve Chriſt with all your hearts; *if the hearts of the Sons of men be fully ſet in them to do evil*, then much more let the hearts of the ſons of God be fully ſet in them to do good.

Eccle. 8. 5
Ier. 3. 5.

Conſid. 5

5. *If ye are not altogether Chriſtians, ye will never be able to appear with comfort before God, not to ſtand in judgement of the laſt and great day*, for this ſad dilemma will ſilence every Hypocrite; If my Commands were not *holy, juſt and good*, why didſt thou own them; if they were *holy, juſt and good*, why didſt thou not obey them? If Jeſus Chriſt was not worth the having, why didſt thou profeſs him? if he was, then why didſt thou not cleave to him, and cloſe with him? If my Ordinances were not appointed to convert and ſave ſouls, why didſt thou ſit under them, and reſt in the performance of them? or if they were, then why didſt thou not ſubmit to the power of them?

If Religion be not good, why doſt thou profeſs it? if it be good why doſt thou not practiſe it? *Friend how cameſt thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment.* If it was not a Wedding feaſt, why didſt thou come at the invitation? and if it was, then why didſt thou come without a *wedding garment.*

Mat. 22. 12.

I would but ask an Hypocritical profeſſour of the Goſpel, what he will anſwer in that day. Verily you deprive your ſelves of all poſſibility of Apology in the day of the righteous judgment of God; it is ſaid of this man that had no Wedding garment on, that when Chriſt came and examined him, *he was ſpeechleſs*; he that is *graceleſs*, in a day of grace, will be *ſpeechleſs* in a day of judgment: profeſſing Chriſt without a heart to cloſe with Chriſt, will leave our ſouls inexcuſable, and make our damnation unavoidable, and more intolerable.

Mat. 11. 22.

Theſe are the motives to inforce the duty, and oh that God would ſet them home upon your hearts and conſciences,

ſciences ,. that you might not dare to reſt a moment longer in a half work , or in being Chriſtians within a little , but that you might be altogether Chriſtians.

Quere. *But you will ſay poſſibly, how ſhall I do, what means ſhall I uſe, that I may attain to a through work in my heart; that I may be no longer almoſt, but altogether a Chriſtian?*

Anſw. Now I ſhall lay down three rules of directions , inſtead of many ; to further and help you in this important duty, and ſo leave this work to Gods bleſſing.

Direct. 1 Firſt , *Break off all falſe peace of conſcience* ; this is the Devils bond to hold the ſoul from ſeeking after Chriſt. As there is the peace of God, ſo there is the peace of Satan , but they are eaſily known , for they are as contrary as Heaven and Hell , as light and darkneſs.

7) The peace of God flows from a work of grace in the ſoul, and is the peace of a regenerate ſtate ; but the peace of Satan is the peace of an regenerate

unregenerate ſtate, it is the peace of Death, in the grave *Job* ſaith their is peace, *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling*, ſo a ſoul dead in ſin is full of peace, the wicked one troubleth him not. Iob.3.17.

2) The peace of God in the ſoul, is a peace flowing from the removal of guilt, by juſtifying grace, *Rom.* 5.1. *being juſtified by faith in his blood, we have peace with God*; but the peace of Satan in the ſoul ariſes, and is maintained by a ſtupidneſs of ſpirit, and inſenſibleneſs of guilt upon the conſcience.

3) The peace of God is a peace *from ſin*, that fortifies the heart againſt it, *The peace of God that paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds through Chriſt Jeſus*, Philip 4.7. the more of this peace there is in the ſoul, the more is the ſoul fortified againſt ſin; But the peace of Satan is a peace in ſin, *the ſtrong man armed keeps the houſe, and there all is at peace*, Luk. 11.21. The Saints peace, is a peace with God, but not with ſin, the ſinners peace, is a peace with ſin, but φρουρήσει

but not with God; and this is a peace better broke then kept, it is a falſe, a dangerous, an undoing peace, my brethren, death and judgment will break all peace of conſcience, but onely that which is wrought by Chriſt in the ſoul, and is the fruit of the blood of ſprinkling, when *he gives quietneſs who then can make trouble?* Job 34.29. Now that peace that death will break, why ſhould you keep? who would be fond of that quietneſs which the flames of Hell will burn in ſunder? and yet how many travel to Hell, through the fools paradice of a falſe peace.

Oh break off this peace; for we can have no peace with God in Chriſt, whilſt this peace remains in our hearts; *intus exiſtens prohibet alienum.* The Lord Chriſt gives no peace to them that will not ſeek it, and that man will never ſeek it, that doth not ſee his need of it; and he that is at peace in his luſt, ſees no need of the peace of Chriſt. The ſinner muſt be wounded for ſin, and troubled under it, before Chriſt will heal his wounds, and give him peace from it.

Direct. 2 2. *Labour after a through work of conviction*, every conviction will not do it: the *almoſt Chriſtian*, hath his convictions as well as the true Chriſtian, or elſe he had never gone ſo far; but they are not ſound and right convictions, or elſe he had gone farther; God will have the ſoul truely ſenſible of the bitterneſs of ſin, before it ſhall taſt the ſweetneſs of mercy. The Plow of conviction muſt go deep, and make deep furrows in the heart, before God will ſow the precious ſeed of grace and comfort there, that ſo it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the conſtant method of God, firſt to ſhew man his *ſin* then his *Saviour*; firſt his *danger* then his *redeemer*; firſt his *wound*, then *his cure*; firſt his *own vileneſs*, then *Chriſts righteouſneſs*. We muſt be brought to cry out *unclean, unclean*, *to mourn for him whom we have peirced*, and then he *ſets open* for us *a fountain to waſh in, for ſin. and for uncleanneſs*, *Zach.* 12.

and the four laſt verſes, compared with *Zach.* 13. and the firſt verſe. That is a notable place, *Job* 33. 27,28. *He looked upon men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light.* The ſinner muſt ſee the unprofitableneſs of his unrighteouſneſs, before he profits by Chriſts righteouſneſs. The *Iſraelites* are firſt ſtung with the *fiery Serpents*, and then the *brazen Serpent* is ſet up. *Ephraim* is firſt throughly convinced, and then Gods bowels of mercy work towards him. Thus it was with *Paul*, *Manaſſeh*, the *Jaylor*, &c. So that this is the unchangeable method of God in working grace to begin with conviction of ſin.

Num. 21. 6,8.

Oh therefore labour for through convictions, and there are three things we ſhould eſpecially be convinced of.

Firſt, *Be convinced of the evil of ſin*, the filthy and heinous nature of it; this is the greateſt evil in the World, it wrongs God, it wounds Chriſt, it grieves the holy ſpirit, it ruineth a precious ſoul; all other evils are not to be named with this. My Brethren, though to do ſin be the worſt work, yet to ſee ſin is the beſt ſight; for ſin diſcovered in its vileneſs, makes Chriſt to be deſired in his fulneſs.

But above all labour to be convinced of the miſchief of an unſound heart, what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruine it brings upon the ſoul, Oh think often of the *Hypocrites hell, Mat.* 24.51.

Secondly, *Be convinced of the miſery and deſperate danger of a natural condition*, for till we ſee the plague of our hearts, and the miſery of our ſtate by nature, we ſhall never be brought out of our ſelves, to ſeek help in another.

Direct. 3 Thirdly, *Be convinced of the utter inſufficiency and inability of any thing below Chriſt Jeſus, to miniſter releif to thy ſoul in this caſe*: all things beſides Jeſus Chriſt are *Phyſitians of no value*; duties, performances, prayers, tears, ſelf-righteouſneſs avail nothing

Iob 13 4.

nothing in this caſe; they make us like *the Troupes of Tema*, to *return aſhamed* at our diſappointment from ſuch *failing brooks*. Iob.6.19, 20.

Alaſs! it is an *infinite righteouſneſs* that muſt ſatisfie for us, for it is an *infinite God*, that is offended by us. If ever thy ſin be pardoned it is *infinite mercy* that muſt pardon it, if ever thou be reconciled to God, it is *infinite merit* muſt do it; if ever thy heart be changed, and thy ſtate renewed, it is *infinite power muſt effect* it; and if ever thy ſoul eſcape hell, and be ſaved at laſt, it is *infinite grace muſt* ſave it.

In theſe three things right and ſound conviction lieth. And wherever the Spirit of God worketh theſe through convictions, it is in order to a true and ſound converſion. For by this means the ſoul is brought under a right qualification for the receiving Chriſt.

You muſt know, that a ſinner, *quatenus* a ſinner, can never come to Chriſt, for he is dead in ſin, in enmity againſt Chriſt, an enemy to God,

and

and the grace of God; but there are certain qualifications that come between the ſouls dead ſtate in ſin, and the work of converſion and cloſing with Chriſt, whereby the ſoul is put into a capacity of receiving the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. For no man is brought immediately out of his dead ſtate, and made to beleive in Jeſus Chriſt. There are *termini mediantes*, ſome qualifications comming in between; now ſound convictions are the right qualifications, for the ſinners receiving Chriſt, *for he came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance*; that is, ſuch as ſee themſelves ſinners, and thereby in a loſt condition; ſo *Luke* explains it, *The ſon of man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt*; he is *annointed* and *ſent* to *bind up the broken hearted, to comfort all that mourn*.

Se Nortons Orthod. Evangeliſt p. 130.

Mat. 9. 12. 13.

Luk. 19. 10.

Iſa. 61 1, 2

Oh therefore if you would be ſound Chriſtians, get ſound convictions; ask thoſe that are beleivers indeed, and they will tell you, had it not been for their convictions, they had never ſought after Chriſt fo

ſancti

ſanctification, and ſalvation; they will tell you, they had periſhed, if they had not periſhed; they had been in eternal bondage, but for their ſpiritual bondage; had they not been loſt as to themſelves, they had been utterly loſt as to Chriſt. ***periiſſem niſi periiſſem.***

Direction. 3 3. *Never reſt in convictions, till they end in converſion*: this is that wherein moſt men miſcarry, they reſt in their convictions, and take them for converſion; as if ſin ſeen were therefore forgiven, or as if a ſight of the want of grace, were the truth of the work of grace.

That is a notable place in *Hoſ.* 13. 13. *Ephraim is an unwiſe Son, for he ſhould not ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children.* The place of the breaking forth of Children is the Womb; as the child comes out of the womb, ſo is converſion born out of the womb of conviction. Now when the child ſticks between the Womb and the World, it is dangerous, it hazard's the life both of Mother and Child; ſo when a ſinner reſts in conviction, and goes no farther but ſticks *in the place of the breaking forth of Children*, this is very dangerous and hazards the life of the ſoul.

You that are at any time under convictions; Oh take heed of reſting in them, do not *ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of children*; though it is true that conviction is the firſt ſtep to converſion, yet it is not converſion; a man may carry his convictions along with him into hell.

What is that which troubleth poor creatures when they come to dye, but this, I have not improved my cenvictions; at ſuch a time I was convinced of ſin, but yet I went on in ſin, in the face of my convictions; in ſuch a Sermon I was convined of ſuch a duty, but I ſlighted the conviction; I was convinced of my want of Chriſt, and of the readineſs of Chriſt to pardon and ſave, but alaſs I followed not the conviction.

My brethren remember this, ſlighted convictions are the worſt deathbed companions. There are two things eſpecially which above all others make a death-bed very uncomfortable.

1. *Purpoſes and promiſes not performed.*

2. *Convictions ſlighted, and not improved.*

When a man takes up purpoſes to cloſe with Chriſt, and yet puts them not into execution, and when he is convinced of ſin, and dutie, and yet improves not his convictions. Oh this will ſting and wound at laſt.

Now therefore, hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your ſouls? have you ever been convinced of the evil of ſin, of the miſery of a natural eſtate, of the inſufficiency of all things under Heaven, to help, of the fulneſs and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, of the neceſſity of and reſting upon him for pardon and peace, for ſanctification and ſalvation? have you ever been really convinced of theſe things? Oh then! as you love your own ſouls, as ever you hope to be ſaved at laſt, and injoy God for ever, improve theſe convictions; and be ſure you reſt not in them till they riſe up to a through cloſe with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and ſo end in a ſound and perfect converſion, Thus ſhall you be not onely *almoſt* but *altogether Chriſtians*.

FINIS.

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